Commentary
May 1999

The War on the War on Crime
Arch Puddington

America's Muslims Against America's Jews
Daniel Pipes

The Forger and the Spy
Igor Golomstock

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Building Hitler's Bomb
Jeremy Bernstein

Was Kissinger Right?
Gabriel Schoenfeld

The Century's Musical Masterpieces: Part 2
Terry Teachout

Exchanges
On Dying / Orthodoxy Today / Secrecy / Racial Preferences / Isaiah Berlin

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George Weigel • Ruth R. Wisse • Dan Seligman
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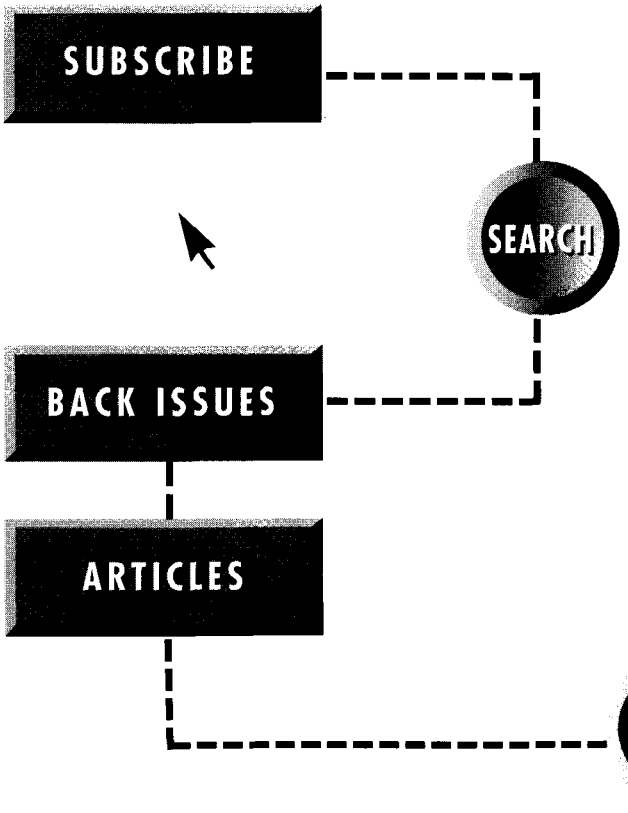

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Commentary
May 1999

Letters from Readers

On Death and Dying

To the Editor:

In "Dying Made Easy" [February], Paul R. McHugh attempts to be topical by juxtaposing the act of euthanasia committed by Jack Kevorkian on *60 Minutes* with the book *Tuesdays with Morrie*. But these are bad takeoff points for analyzing end-of-life issues. It would have been better had he discussed a recent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in which the author—a physician and the executive editor of the journal—describes her father's suicide and the suicide of a Nobel laureate with whom she was acquainted. Both men were terminally ill but cogent and lucid. They were boxed in, and chose suicide in preference to degradation.

By using amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) as the disease crystallizing the issue, Dr. McHugh ignores those with less attractive conditions. Dementia, for example, is not about idle talk and philosophizing, but about fear on the edge of a black hole. What the majority of intelligent people fear most is that a state of helplessness and a loss of dignity might sneak up on them, not allowing them the choice to end their lives before their families remember them only as empty shells. Dr. McHugh gives examples of patients who were rational to the end. But how does his discussion apply to patients overwhelmed with and completely disabled by the ravages of a more destructive disease?

There are honorable reasons for suicide. Jack Kevorkian is the problem here. He is an amoral, self-aggrandizing advocate, and distracts from the real issue, which is dignity.

John Dale Dunn, M.D.
Lake Brownwood, Texas

To the Editor:

Libertarianism may underscore the primacy of the individual and of taking responsibility for one's own life, Paul R. McHugh argues, but when it comes to terminally ill patients, "outside forces" are likely to "overwhelm the self, rendering it vulnerable to unreflective impulses." This is his only comment in assessing the myriad circumstances surrounding an individual's wish to depart this life.

Dr. McHugh believes that patients turn to physicians not only for medical attention but also because "their [own] capacities for thinking and planning have been compromised." He goes on to claim that "the physician as a provider of reasoned guidance . . . helps a patient differentiate good from bad, right from wrong, responsible decisions from impulses." It is only by submitting to this moral intrusion, according to Dr. McHugh, that suffering individuals can escape the disastrous "propositions advanced by [their own] unsettled and possibly unbalanced minds."

This sort of certitude and rectitude has a menacing sound to anyone with a deep respect for human worth and dignity. For Dr. McHugh, it would seem that few of us are adequate to the task of living life, talking about it, or deciding to close it down.

John Fenner, M.D.
Carmel Valley, California

To the Editor:

While Paul McHugh is certainly to be congratulated for his cogent criticisms of two extreme and poorly thought-out approaches to the issue of euthanasia, I cannot help feeling cheated by his essay. He accuses Jack Kevorkian, appropriately enough, of being a nihilist who misunderstands the true meaning of liberty and foolishly elevates the patient's immediate feelings into inalienable rights. He dismisses the conversations of Mitch Albom and Morris Schwartz, as related in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, as empty rhetoric. But where

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is the reasoned middle ground between these two unreasonable (and unreasoned) extremes? Where is Dr. McHugh's own position? Nowhere to be found.

Certainly Dr. McHugh has such a position. Why, then, does he so assiduously avoid any indication—let alone advocacy—of it? I hesitate to guess his motives, but I feel compelled to call him to task for leaving the central question of his essay unanswered, even unaddressed. Death is not easy, and those who give easy answers certainly deserve criticism—but only from someone willing to work toward the hard answers.

GEORGE M. FELIS
Denver, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR:

If Paul R. McHugh had done nothing more than correct the misconception that patients with ALS are destined to die a horrible death, his insightful article would have served a valuable purpose. Television programs that have used patients suffering with the distressing, paralyzing symptoms of ALS to argue for legalizing assisted suicide and euthanasia have fostered public misconceptions about the disease. The *60 Minutes* program discussed by Dr. McHugh, in which Jack Kevorkian is shown giving a lethal injection to Thomas Youk, a patient with ALS, is but the most recent example.

Kevorkian never addressed what might have been done to relieve Youk's distress. Youk was said to be afraid of choking from being unable to swallow his own saliva, for example, but there was no discussion of medications that can control this problem. Dame Cicely Saunders, the English physician who founded the hospice movement, has written that she has treated thousands of patients with ALS and none of them has choked or suffocated to death.

Although Youk's case was treated by the media as the first showing of euthanasia on American television, in December 1994 ABC's *Prime Time Live* played an excerpt from a Dutch documentary showing a physician ending the life of a patient who had recently been diagnosed with ALS. That program introduced the film as a story of "courage and love," but enough detail was provided to make clear that the patient was decidedly ambivalent about dying and wanted to put off the date for his death. The doctor, who was supporting the desire of the patient's wife to move forward quickly, ignored that ambivalence. The doctor never saw the patient alone, permitted the wife to answer all questions for the patient about whether he wanted to die, and presented a frightening and inaccurate picture of the death that awaited him without euthanasia.

Dr. McHugh understands that more than relief of distressing symptoms is involved in giving comfort and meaning to the last months of those who are terminally ill. His account of Morris Schwartz, the sociology professor dying from ALS, suggests the sense of purpose Schwartz achieved through sharing his thoughts with someone who valued him.

The producer of the Dutch television documentary was asked what role his filming the last months of the patient's life might have played in the man's decision for euthanasia. He replied that, if anything, it might have led the patient to postpone the date because he was enjoying the company of the producer and his staff. This is not surprising, since the filmmakers valued the patient and gave meaning to his life that he was not finding elsewhere.

The palliative-care specialist Robert Twycross has written, "where there is hope, there is life," referring not to the hope of a cure but to the hope of doing something that gives meaning to life as long as it lasts. Without such purpose, terminally ill patients may be tortured by the feeling that they are only waiting to die—and may want to die at once.

HERBERT HENDIN, M.D.
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for Paul R. McHugh's remarkable article. His analysis of Jack Kevorkian's euthanizing of Thomas Youk is the best kind of public ethical reasoning and all the better for his carrying it off without any trace of sermonizing in an area that naturally invites it. But the truly surprising part of this piece was his subtle exegesis of *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Dr. McHugh uncovers the moral poverty behind the spunky one-liners of an amusing and courageous stoic. Morrie's will to live is admirable, but it is not sustained by a larger ethical vision, much less a religious one. And Youk's will to die has only the one-dimensional Kevorkian as its interpreter. In both instances, Dr. McHugh shows how much language has failed us.

Poetry and testimony—the rich poetry of lament and the compelling stories of human survivors—are the communal and cultural resources people need to face extreme human situations. By contrast, the instinctive rhetoric of rights and the glib nostrums of popular psychology leave people victimized.

[REV.] ROBERT F. LEAVITT
St. Mary's Seminary and University
Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for publishing "Dying Made Easy." Bravo to COMMENTARY and Paul R. McHugh for excellent writing and reasoning.

WESLEY J. SMITH
Oakland, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Paul R. McHugh's "Dying Made Easy" is an extraordinary, wise statement. How reassuring to know this man is shaping the training of students of psychiatry.

ROBERT PICKUS
Berkeley, California

PAUL R. MCHUGH writes:

In my essay I protested the moral collapse that enabled a national television program to feature the slaying of a man with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). I also expressed disappointment with the book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, because I expected but found no principles in it to thwart those who would prescribe medical killing for this disease.

John Dunn thinks I should have discussed terminal conditions that lack the "attractive" (his word) features of ALS because, he holds, there are honorable reasons for suicide, one of

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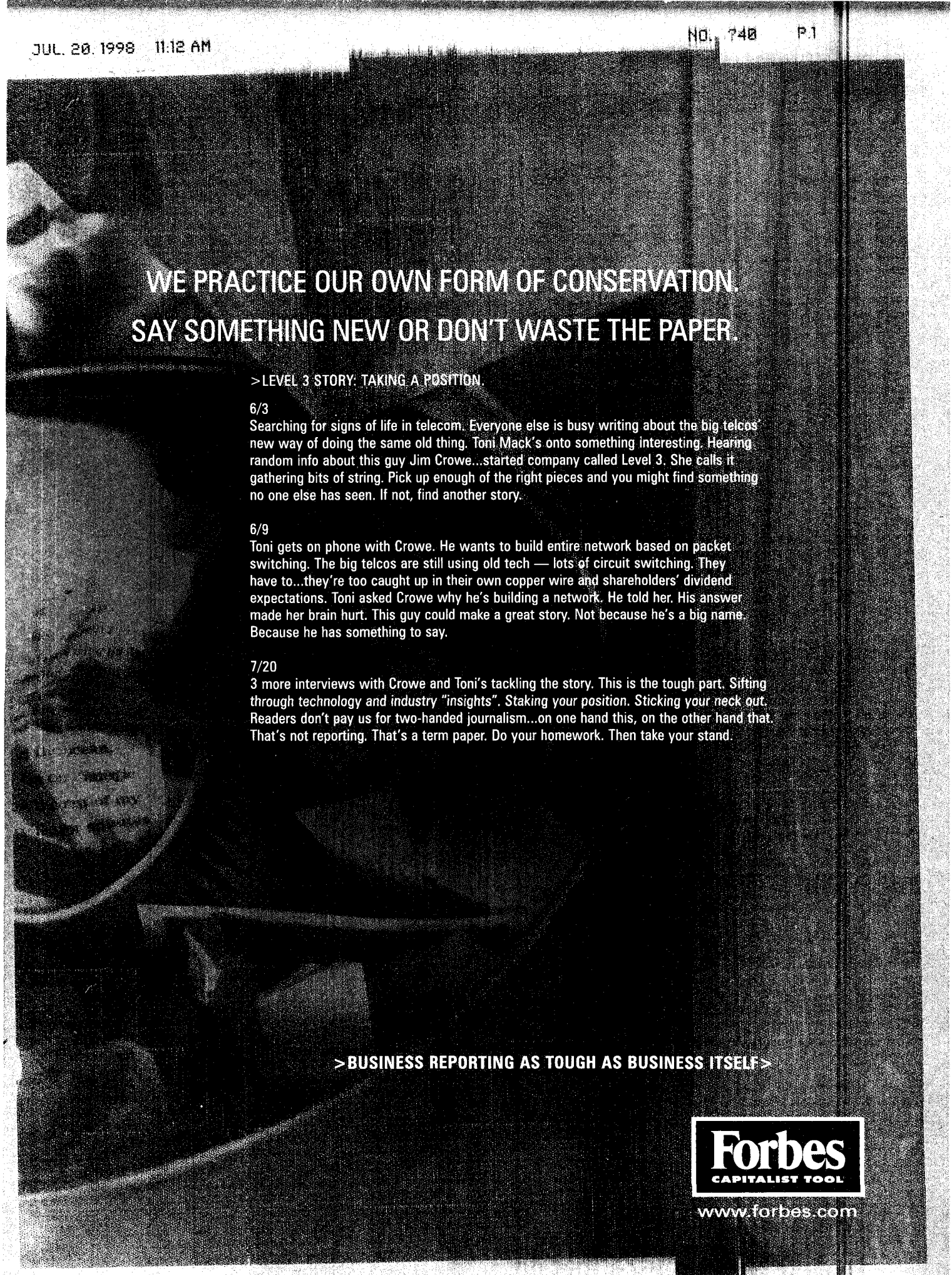

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6/9
Toni gets on phone with Crowe. He wants to build entire network based on packet switching. The big telcos are still using old tech — lots of circuit switching. They have to...they're too caught up in their own copper wire and shareholders' dividend expectations. Toni asked Crowe why he's building a network. He told her. His answer made her brain hurt. This guy could make a great story. Not because he's a big name. Because he has something to say.

7/20
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which he identifies as "fear," particularly fear of the loss of dignity that occurs with dementia. This issue deserves an essay of its own. Let me just make a few points based on *The Thirty-Six Hour Day*, a book by my colleagues Peter Rabins and Nancy Mace devoted to providing life with dignity rather than death with dignity to patients with Alzheimer's dementia. Basically, they argue that the aim of doctoring under difficult circumstances is to protect what is worth protecting. To this end, both patients and doctors must determine what is indispensable and what is not. The truth is that, as it is tough getting into life, it can be tough getting out, and on both occasions, what people generally call dignity ranks low on any list of what is vital. If you doubt this, ask the mother who bore you.

For the terminally ill, overwhelming catastrophic fear of the unknown is a cruel enemy whose grounds and features vary from person to person and from condition to condition. Doctors and nurses (particularly those experienced in such disorders as ALS and dementia), if given the opportunity and infused with the will, can allay these fears by providing information, guidance, treatment, and support. Their efforts can help patients believe in the significance, indeed the dignity, of their own existence and thus, despite the depredations of nature, avoid a despairing death—although I suppose this is what John Fenner would call "moral intrusion."

In the *New England Journal of Medicine* article recommended by Dr. Dunn, the two suicidal patients were never examined psychiatrically. The author of that paper considered their likely and possibly treatable depression to be "beside the point." Indeed, we know nothing of these patients' actual mental states other than what the proponent of their deaths would have us know. Although, as can be seen in this example, supporters of patient suicide seem to prefer operating in a state of ignorance, it is dangerous to formulate policy from such a position.

George Felis complains that by not proposing a "middle ground" between Kevorkian's homicides and Morrie's empty rhetoric, I was being evasive and not stating my own position. But I see no middle ground between these two examples. As for my own position, I thought I had made it clear in my essay, but let me repeat it here.

To doctors I would say: choose life and deal with what flows from that decision in your practice, teaching, and research. That will keep you busy, and you will find yourself heartened by the company of many good people. One of them is Herbert Hendin, whose comments I appreciate and whose stalwart efforts include the careful study of the effects of "assisted-suicide" policies in Holland. Dr. Hendin's recent book, *Seduced by Death*, exposes the coarsening of character among both doctors and citizens that the "Dutch cure" encourages; my correspondents should read it. Father Robert Leavitt, too, appears to be someone who knows where true solace and strength in adversity can be found. Finally, let me thank Wesley J. Smith and Robert Pickus for their kind words.

Orthodoxy Today

TO THE EDITOR:

In fairness to Jack Wertheimer ["The Orthodox Moment," February], it is not easy for any outsider to plumb the inner intricacies of an extremely multifaceted American Orthodox Judaism. He has introduced the general reader to a new world. Many of his observations—especially his incisive analysis of the conflict sparked by Orthodox students at Yale—were on the mark. But many others were not.

Any of the scores of thousands of former students of America's yeshiva heads (*roshei yeshiva*) will tell you that their rabbis were hardly "cushioned from reality and free to pursue a form of legal idealism," as Mr. Wertheimer writes. To the contrary, the success of the first generation of America's yeshiva heads—like Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, Joseph Soloveitchik, Isaac Hutner, Moshe Feinstein, Aaron Kotler, Jacob Ruderman, and Yaakov Kamenetsky—was based on their unique ability to "read" America and understand the innermost yearnings of American Jewish youth. As a group, they eschewed extremism of any kind. Their greatness lay in their ability to establish lifelong relationships with students, to create a world of intellectualism, scholarship, wisdom, depth, spirituality, and self-sacrifice that succeeded in overcoming America's business-like coldness and impersonalization. It is they who restored status and dignity to Torah study and who demonstrated through their incisive and brilliant lectures and tireless private discussions with students that Torah study merited lifelong devotion.

It is truly tragic that for American Jews who are not Orthodox, this most ancient and demanding form of Judaism remains a secret religion. They meet Orthodoxy exclusively in the overpublicized public debates in the media, but its inner life—its belief system, its intellect, scholarship, and vibrancy, its incessant search for truth, the intense joy of its Sabbaths and holidays—remains to them a sealed book.

Even I, who was raised in a traditional home and attended Hebrew day schools through high school, was delightfully shocked the first time I entered the study hall of Rabbi Chaim Berlin at age twenty. The animated excitement and high velocity of the spirited talmudic debate of 400 college-age students were a transforming experience that led to a lifetime of study and association with that school and its saintly *rosh yeshiva*.

Ninety-nine percent of non-Orthodox Jews have never invested the twenty minutes required to experience a similar moment. The intensity of that spiritual and intellectual experience—the actualization of daily Torah study as the essence of Judaism—has been the life-giving heartbeat of the Jewish people for thousands of years and, thank God, remains so.

[RABBI] PINCHAS STOLPER
Senior Executive
Orthodox Union
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer presents a fairly accurate picture of the American Orthodox world today, though

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it is marred by occasional dubious contentions and even outright misrepresentations. For example, Norman Lamm, the president of Yeshiva University, was harshly criticized by a *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) yeshiva dean not because Rabbi Lamm "fail[ed]" to subscribe to a "separatist ideology," as Mr. Wertheimer states, but because he was perceived to have disparaged some who do.

What is striking about the essay, though, is that while Mr. Wertheimer seems to disapprove both of the insularity of contemporary *haredi* society and of the increasingly libertarian "anything-goes" mores of the wider world, he seems oddly reluctant to connect the two. Should he not allow for the possibility—or probability—that the intensification of the former is an understandable, necessary, perhaps even laudable reaction to the latter?

[RABBI] AVI SHAFRAN
Director of Public Affairs
Agudath Israel of America
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

The main theme of Jack Wertheimer's article is the unexpected vigor of America's Orthodox community and the discomfort this vigor engenders in the general Jewish community, despite all its passion for continuity. His thesis demands some clarification and elaboration.

The official numbers declare that Orthodox Jews are growing fewer, but the numbers game is deceiving. It is true that the much-maligned 1990 National Jewish Population Study finds that the number of Jewish households identifying themselves as Orthodox has shrunk by half in twenty years. But, as Rabbi Yitzchak Adlerstein of Los Angeles has commented, "People lie, statistics lie, but pizza shops don't lie." The number of establishments that cater to strictly Orthodox Jews has been growing exponentially in the last twenty or more years. When businesses thrive, customers must be lurking somewhere.

The explanation for this seeming incongruence is really very simple. A generation or two ago, the typical Orthodox Jew in the United States was as little committed to observance of *halakhah* (Jewish law) as the typical non-Orthodox Jew is today. Today's Orthodox families, as Mr. Wertheimer notes, are strongly committed, and so are their children.

The only area where I must differ sharply with Mr. Wertheimer is in his interpretation of the great power of those whom he calls "immigrant rabbis." He hews to a popular stereotype when he writes that

> in the late 19th century, certain Orthodox rabbis in Europe had developed a new conception of their role. Instead of limiting themselves to deciding matters of Jewish religious law, they had taken to expounding on matters of social policy, politics, and much else besides—all in the name of Torah.

Not so. Throughout Jewish history, great rabbis have been community leaders. Saadia Gaon, Maimonides, Nahmanides, and Solomon ben Abraham Adret (Rashba) led their respective communities in medieval times. Hatam Sofer and Samson Raphael Hirsch were gone before "the late 19th century," and the Vilna Gaon and the great hasidic leaders hardly limited themselves to disputes about dairy spoons falling into meat pots.

When the relative handful of great European rabbis and heads of yeshivas arrived in the United States beginning in the late 30's, they found an Orthodox community in an advanced state of breakdown. It was almost moribund, and few predicted its survival, much less vigorous growth.

Haym Soloveitchik, whom Mr. Wertheimer quotes approvingly, maintains with considerable accuracy that the traditional way of life "is not learned but rather absorbed," that it is "imbibed from parents and friends, and patterned on conduct regularly observed in home and street, synagogue and school." True, but such a tradition hardly existed in an America where Sabbath observance, partitions between men and women in the synagogue, yeshivas, age-old dietary standards, and the prevailing influence of *halakhah* in daily life were virtually nonexistent.

Against this backdrop, the new arrivals in the United States could hardly have counseled their students and followers to follow the prevailing "tradition" of the street and synagogue. It is wrong to say, as many do, that the newcomers *broke* with tradition. To the contrary, tradition had to be reestablished in America, and if one of the ingredients in doing so was to go back to the texts on which Jewish practice had been based, what choice was there?

Far from being unworldly and unaware, the yeshiva and hasidic leaders are in close touch with their students and disciples, and advise them on a wide array of matters. They are consulted precisely because they understand and relate; otherwise they would indeed have been consigned to ivory-tower matters of rabbinic esoterica. It is sad that Mr. Wertheimer yields to the facile pejoratives that are routinely hurled by Orthodoxy's opponents. There are different approaches among us and no shortage of foolishness and worse, but it is hardly true that "extremism" is our "religious norm."

[RABBI] NOSSON SCHERMAN
Mesorah Publications, Ltd.
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

In his rather mean-spirited critique of contemporary Orthodoxy, Jack Wertheimer criticizes the *haredim* for being "superstringent" and "preoccupied with minutiae." I, for one, am baffled. Surely, Mr. Wertheimer must be cognizant of the fact that unlike other branches of Judaism, where Torah law tends to fall into the category of suggestion or recommendation, Orthodox Jews believe that both the written and oral laws are divine. This being the case, the observance and interpretation of Torah law (translation: minutiae) have eternal ramifications. Thus, the Orthodox stance is rather straightforward: eternity is at stake and we are taking no chances.

What is most troubling about Mr. Wertheimer's article, however, is his alarm at the "haredization" of Orthodoxy. He is appalled at the seemingly incomprehensible "syndrome" whereby young people who were formerly modern-Orthodox are moving increasingly to

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the Right. While he attributes this phenomenon to the fact that many of the educators in centrist institutions are *haredi*, he overlooks the most obvious cause for the shift: the younger generation's disenchantment with an increasingly obscene secular culture and its quest for a more spiritually intense and religiously rigorous lifestyle. Indeed, more and more of today's young people are searching for answers to life's most overwhelming questions and are finding those answers only within the fervent, passionate Judaism that has come to be the hallmark of *haredi* society.

NECHAMA PREIS
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's insights on the "Orthodox moment" are generally—and characteristically—perceptive and well-taken. However, I believe his comments on the changing religious role of women in the modern Orthodox community call for further discussion.

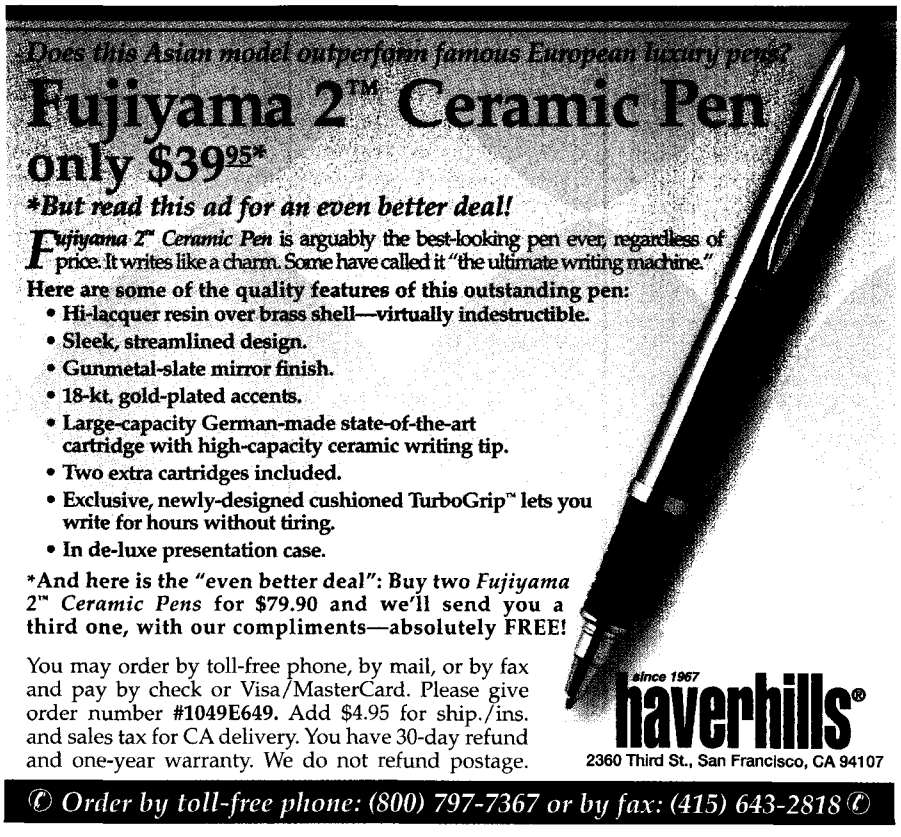
In both the modern Orthodox and *haredi* communities, Jewish literacy for women as well as men is taken for granted. Hesitation among the *haredim* to offer women unfettered access to a formal Talmud education should not mask the fact that women in both communities are taught to feel fully comfortable in a synagogue service, navigate traditional texts, understand classic legal codes, and assume communal leadership positions.

Studying classic texts and codes, Orthodox women have found that many religious activities unexplored by their grandmothers are fully permissible to them. But this paradoxically explains why separate women's prayer groups have been "soft-pedaled," as Mr. Wertheimer notes. I teach at the Yeshivah of Flatbush, where male and female students attend morning and afternoon services and take the same finals in Talmud. Yet, over the years, I have consistently found little if any interest in these prayer groups. Such groups, in fact, do not seem to have much appeal for the majority of Orthodox women, who feel that they are already leading a meaningful life according to *halakhah*. Moreover, literate women recognize that these groups have no resonance in traditional discussions.

With regard to the ordination of female rabbis, it is worth noting that even now, women have already gained professional entry into the world of the Orthodox rabbi. They teach and function as administrators in yeshivas; they lecture and have prominent positions in Jewish public life; their counsel is sought by those who know and respect their knowledge. While the non-Orthodox movements have a monopoly on women rabbis, it is the Orthodox community that has the overwhelming majority of women engaged in serious advanced study of classical Jewish texts.

The activities of feminist and non-Orthodox women's groups in many ways *retard* rather than enhance the expansion of women's roles in the Orthodox community. Secular feminists often dismiss traditional religious authorities as patriarchal, and the Reform and Conservative movements espouse a philosophy of egalitarianism that cannot be supported by an unbiased reading of *halakhic* sources. Additionally, a few outspoken Orthodox women have further clouded the issue by aligning themselves publicly with others who do not share their *halakhic* commitment.

More than a few rabbinic leaders within the Orthodox community are privately sympathetic to suggestions for increased ritual involvement for women, but they simply do not want a public fight over the issue. Whether this is a failure of leadership or a strategic conservation of resources is often a matter of perspective. There are, after all, many other issues facing Orthodoxy and other battles to be fought. In any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event, it inhibits an internal public discussion of a natural, healthy, and inevitable change in the Orthodox community.

JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY
Yeshivah of Flatbush
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer trenchantly analyzes both positive and negative currents within contemporary American Orthodoxy. Orthodox successes in Jewish education, family life, and commitment to Israel should indeed be models for emulation among Jews everywhere. Conversely, the tendency to elevate "extremism as religious norm" and the inability to grant any form of recognition to non-Orthodox religious leaders have frequently polarized relations within the Jewish people. The voice of Orthodoxy needs to be heard within Jewish communal forums, but that voice will simply not resonate when so much of the public face of Orthodoxy suggests contempt for the non-Orthodox religious movements.

Particularly troublesome in this regard has been the collapse of modern Orthodoxy as a bridge with the liberal movements. Mr. Wertheimer politely refrains from faulting the modern Orthodox for their failure to resist a *haredi* ascendancy. Yet the modern Orthodox have not, for example, protested statements by the Israeli chief rabbinate forbidding Reform and Conservative participation in local religious councils—to say nothing of the venom frequently directed at Reform and Conservative rabbis. (Ironically, the willingness of modern-Orthodox rabbis to serve on communal rabbinic boards in the United States has long been a defining issue between them and ultra-Orthodox rabbis.) At the same time, the most traditionalist developments within Reform and Conservative Judaism have elicited not a word of support from the mainstream Orthodox leadership.

To be sure, there are signs of renewal within the modern-Orthodox camp. Conferences on feminism and Orthodoxy have attracted overwhelming grassroots support. Edah, an organization dedicated to revitalizing modern Orthodoxy, has impressive lay and rabbinical leadership. Academic Jewish studies and Jewish communal organizations recently have attracted cadres of modern-Orthodox scholars and professionals willing to assert the values of both Jewish tradition and modern culture.

Nevertheless, a real struggle persists for the soul of contemporary Orthodoxy. Mr. Wertheimer effectively calls for greater communal understanding of Orthodoxy's inner nature and, at least by implication, for communal support of Orthodox currents that will foster both Jewish continuity and Jewish unity. Whether the currents he favors or the forces for greater Orthodox isolation prevail is a question of great significance to the entire Jewish people.

STEVEN BAYME
National Director
Jewish Communal Affairs
American Jewish Committee
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

"The Orthodox Moment" is dispassionate and lucid, and helpful to readers in its clear exposition. Yet there are some glaring lacunae in the article, some of which would challenge Jack Wertheimer's optimism concerning the Orthodox movement's future.

Today, thousands of *haredim* are seriously poor. In the last fifteen years, most *haredi* yeshivas have dropped any pretension to secular-studies programs, which has led to widespread illiteracy in the community. Like many African Americans in the 1940's and 50's, the *haredim* are now positioned completely outside the labor market. Poverty and illiteracy thus combine to assure the recurrence of what I call the Ellis Island phenomenon: no jobs, then no food; no food, then no religious observance.

Add to this the expanded options that now exist for drugs and prostitution, and the *haredi* numbers for tomorrow look a lot less rosy. One dean of a school for advanced talmudic scholarship in Israel assured me that there was not a single *haredi* family in his community that did not have a son or daughter who was leaving the fold; in fact, organizations now exist to pursue these wayward children. This march to self-destruction must surely be taken into account when prognosticating the future of contemporary Orthodoxy.

Mr. Wertheimer also needs to play out some of the implications of the intensive Jewish education now taking place in the Orthodox world, modern and *haredi* alike. One such implication is that most Orthodox college students now come armed with a knowledge of classical Jewish texts far exceeding that of most Conservative and Reform *rabbis*. If for all of their lives these students are taught not to suffer ignorance gladly, then one can understand even while not condoning their smirks when they hear Reform and Conservative sermons; this alone suggests that no long-range attempt at Jewish unity is likely to emerge even from centrist Orthodoxy.

[RABBI] JOSEPH A. POLAK
B'nai B'rith Hillel House
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer has presented us with an excellent understanding of the Orthodox community. His analysis and the implications he draws from it are mistaken, however, if not the very opposite of what his historical material suggests.

Mr. Wertheimer's primary assertion is that the Orthodox are misunderstood by the rest of the Jewish community. He castigates the community, especially those of us in the religiously observant but non-Orthodox community, for not coming to the defense of the Orthodox students suing Yale, claiming that we have caved in to liberal values at the expense of Jewish values.

I wonder what Mr. Wertheimer would say to the religiously observant and learned students from all the religious streams, including the Orthodox, who did not protest the living conditions at Yale but who continue to remain both in the dorms and in the classrooms? Would he say they have given up their religious values and cower before the liberal university? This is the core issue with respect to which both Mr. Wertheimer and the Orthodox community err today.

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The mark of a religious individual, one deeply committed to Jewish values and observance, is to be involved in the world, not to withdraw from it. Religious values that cannot stand firm before the test of contemporary culture, that cannot survive the lure of the marketplace or the liberal university, have little staying power as values. It may be safer and easier to withdraw from contemporary life, but, from the time of Abraham onward, Jews have been a people destined to be part of the larger world and to have an impact on it, to confront it with a model of deeply held religious values. It is unfortunate that today's Orthodox world has narrowed its understanding of this Jewish role, because our society and culture need to experience and feel the values of Judaism lived by the Orthodox community.

Finally, I feel Mr. Wertheimer's remarks about the liberalism of the university are disingenuous. The entire Jewish community has benefited greatly from a liberal United States. The ability to live, work, and go to school everywhere in the U.S. as an observant Jew is taken for granted today, with nearly every institution, from the public-school system to the military, willing to accommodate the religious needs of Jews. There are aspects of our liberalism and open society that cause me pain and discomfort as an observant Jew, as one who has values that differ from the general culture. But I believe it is our responsibility not to castigate liberal institutions but rather to help make them stronger and more responsive. What Mr. Wertheimer fails to tell us is that Yale tried to be open and sensitive, offering the protesting students many accommodations including their own dorm suites and bathrooms.

Mr. Wertheimer cannot write about the "haredization" of Orthodoxy while at the same time castigating both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews who hold a more open *halakhic* stance. In fact, the more crucial *mitzvah* is to remain a full participant in the community, with all its tensions and uncertainties, than to pull apart from it and live in constricting isolation.

[RABBI] JOEL H. MEYERS
Executive Vice President
Rabbinical Assembly
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer suggests that the countercultural posture of Orthodox Judaism today, particularly its continued adherence to traditional sexual values, could serve as a rallying point for the broader Jewish community to challenge contemporary American hedonism in the name of Jewish ideals.

Unfortunately, the insularity of the Orthodox community has become so extreme that Orthodox leadership, intent on protecting its tiny enclaves, shows no interest in influencing the larger society. Thus the new president of the ultra-Orthodox Agudath Israel, declaring that "contemporary society is . . . steeped in immorality, from the top down," could only suggest removing televisions, VCR's, and the Internet from Orthodox homes. And the modern Orthodox differ only in degree: the president of the Orthodox Union, commenting on the Yale Five, argued that these young men and women, and others like them, had no business being at Yale, since all Orthodox students should attend only sectarian Orthodox institutions. Motivated by the perverse logic of the-worse-the-better, Orthodox leaders may actually prefer mixed-sex dorms because they expose the essential depravity of American culture and deter young Orthodox Jews from venturing into it. As for the few modern-Orthodox schools that encourage applications to the Ivy League, they fear that rocking the Yale boat could make it harder for present and future graduates to get in.

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TO THE EDITOR:

"The Orthodox Moment" really consists of two articles. The first is a history of the evolution of American Orthodoxy over the last two generations, and the second is a discussion of the Yale Five. The first article is excellent, though I would quibble with Jack Wertheimer's assertion that the narrow-mindedness of the religious Left is equivalent to that of the Right. Although there is harsh rhetoric at both ends of the spectrum, it has been my experience to encounter more of it from the Orthodox sphere, in which I live.

With respect to the second article, I take issue. I have little sympathy for the Orthodox students at Yale: instead of going to one Y.U., they could have gone to another Y.U.—Yeshiva University—which would have easily accommodated their needs. It is not clear to me why Yale must accommodate them. It is extremely easy to be Orthodox at numerous other first-class educational institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia, and Brandeis, all of which boast exciting Orthodox communities contained within a secular environment.

Mr. Wertheimer's suggestion that the non-Orthodox community should have given its support to the Yale Five is an attempt, I think, to extend a bridge to Orthodoxy. The problem with such an alliance is that the cultural chasm between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox (and the rest of American society) is, for better or worse, too great. It might have been more interesting had Mr. Wertheimer suggested that an alliance be built around the issue of school vouchers. He might favor this in view of his own Conservative movement's expanding Solomon Schecter schools—over 70 in operation and twenty on the drawing boards—all of which require hefty funding. The Orthodox are already tapped out from supporting their network of private schools. This may be an area for creating a common alliance—though the price to be paid, a breach in church-state separation, is perhaps too great.

JOSEPH R. RACKMAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, Jack Wertheimer wonders why most Jews did not rally to the defense of the Orthodox students at Yale. Yet he fails to address the key questions related to the case: did these students choose Yale freely? Did they have other choices? Did they or should they have known of the school's dormitory policy prior to acceptance? If "yes" to this last question, should they not have discussed their concerns with the administration beforehand?

The bottom line is that the students were not *forced* to accept these regulations—there are other schools. The "road to change" is for bright Orthodox students not to go to Yale. It will be the school's loss, and the school may get the message.

GEORGE ESSENFELD
Stamford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer correctly identifies the problem in the dispute between Orthodox Jewish students at Yale and the university's sexually-correct living arrangements: is Yale's understanding of pluralism broad enough to allow morally and religiously objecting students the right to "an alternative lifestyle," that is, one that does not include sexually integrated quarters? Or is Yale's embrace of diversity one that stops short of accommodating the appetite for diversity that these students desire?

The Catholic League filed an *amicus* brief in this case in support of the students, even though none was Catholic. That is because what is at stake is something that transcends any particular religion: freedom of association and religious liberty. If nothing else, this case demonstrates—one more time—who the practitioners of intolerance really are.

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE
President
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer is a clarion voice in the wilderness. He correctly distinguishes between the harshness of much Orthodox belief and the valid ethical and moral behavior that the Orthodox often espouse. However, between the dual tensions in Orthodoxy, there lies a third way. Curiously enough, it is in the Conservative, *halakhic*, pluralistic, intellectual movement in which Mr. Wertheimer is a prominent educator.

I am a Hebrew high-school teacher in a modern Conservative synagogue. We espouse a value system that is ethical and moral and condemns the sexual lifestyles that young Jews are tacitly or not so tacitly encouraged to adopt in the secular world. Most but not all of my teenage students are opposed to the "progressive" sexual regime that has become institutionalized on American college campuses. Mr. Wertheimer, the good news is that many of your own young fellow Jews and students, Conservative though they may be, do "get it."

TEDDY ZABB
New Rochelle, New York

JACK WERTHEIMER writes:

Orthodox Judaism, like traditional forms of religion generally, tends to evoke strong passions. I am therefore particularly grateful for the measured tone, by and large, of these letters. Even as they vividly highlight key fault lines in contemporary Orthodox Jewry—indeed, within the Jewish community as a whole—they help to illuminate a complex phenomenon.

My own comments will address three themes that cut across a number of the letters. To begin with, almost all my correspondents touch upon the insularity of the ultra-Orthodox or *haredi* world, even if they offer differing assessments of it. On the one hand, Rabbi Avi Shafran views *haredi* separatism as "understandable, necessary, perhaps even laudable," while Rabbis Pinchas Stolper and Nosson Scherman downplay any of its possibly deleterious consequences by focusing on the role played by ultra-Orthodox leaders of the last generation in the remarkable efflorescence of study and religious observance. On the other hand, Rabbi Joseph A. Polak regards *haredi* separatism as an occupational and economic disaster in the making; Steven Bayme fears it is si-

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lencing the "voice of Orthodoxy" within Jewish communal forums; and Lawrence Grossman laments its negative effects on the engagement of Orthodox Jews with "the larger society." Adding a different emphasis, Joel B. Wolowelsky hints that the new roles being played by women in all sectors of the Orthodox community, including the *haredi* enclaves, may yet redraw the map of Orthodox life.

The last four writers offer important grounds for questioning the wisdom of separatist polices still dominant in the *haredi* world and increasingly influential in other sectors of Orthodoxy. As a strategy forged in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the last century, under circumstances vastly different from our own, separatism may be doing far more harm than good to Orthodox Jews themselves. Certainly, it is one of the most divisive forces in the contemporary American Jewish community.

This brings me to the second theme: the current relationship between Orthodoxy and other movements in American Judaism. As several correspondents explicitly recognize, in my essay I was hoping to further understanding through a sympathetic appreciation of the Orthodox world and also to suggest areas where a common approach might be forged across denominational lines. Even though they may differ with me on how and where to construct bridges, Steven Bayme, Rabbi Polak, and Joseph R. Rackman understand the need to encourage the search. But when it comes to concrete instances, and in particular to the case of the Yale students—the third theme in the letters—things get more heated.

Rabbi Joel H. Meyers, George Essenfeld, and Mr. Rackman take me to task for suggesting that the Jewish community should have sided with the students. Before highlighting where we differ, I should stipulate that Yale does offer many religious accommodations to observant Jews. I also believe, with Rabbi Meyers, that "the mark of a religious individual, one deeply committed to Jewish values and observance, is to be involved with the world." The question is how to pursue that involvement.

Whatever one may think of the lawsuit itself, the Yale case provided the Jewish community with a powerful educational opportunity. In the first instance, this was an opportunity to discuss internally, in Jewish settings like synagogues, the degree to which Judaism's views of sexual morality are at odds with prevailing mores, especially on college campuses. I do not share Rabbi Meyers's optimism about the ability of Jewish "religious values" to stand "firm before the test of contemporary culture." How widely are Jewish teachings on sexuality (and many other subjects) even *known* within the Jewish community?

Here, in other words, was an opportunity to demonstrate that almost all Jewish religious movements share an abhorrence of promiscuity as well as an unshakable conviction that marriage is the central and ideal setting for the expression of human sexuality. This is not just an Orthodox (or, *pace* Teddy Zabb, a Conservative) issue. Nor is it the only issue on which there is wide denominational agreement. Were Jews to devote less time worrying about the imagined dangers of a large-scale reversion to "ghetto Judaism"—the *haredim*, remember, are still a minority within a minority—they might well find many points of commonality.

Finally, the Yale incident could have informed Jews—including those Orthodox students at Yale who have opted to "live and let live"—about ways of engaging in the larger national debate over social and ethical issues without the automatic "me, too-ism" that characterizes so many Jewish discussions of American public policy. A different way of thinking, a way of thinking that calls frankly upon Jewish ideas and idioms, might even help establish new types of al-

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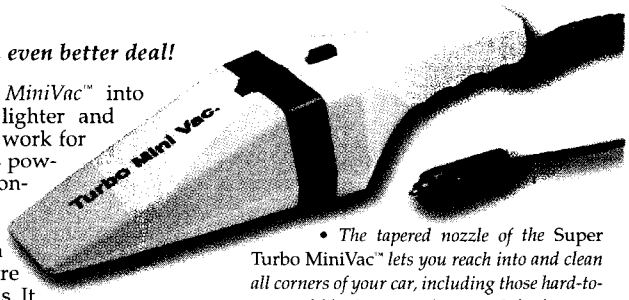

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liances, as the letter of William A. Donohue suggests.

SEVERAL POINTS in individual letters warrant further comment. Perhaps predictably, the one correspondent who finds my article "mean-spirited"—Nechama Preis—goes on to dismiss with sweeping disdain every version of Judaism but Orthodoxy, on the grounds that all allegedly treat religious law as merely a "suggestion or recommendation." The truth, of course, is that Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism differ markedly among themselves, and each of them is also—if I may use Rabbi Pinchas Stolper's words about Orthodoxy—"extremely multifaceted."

Rabbi Avi Shafran clarifies, from his point of view, why Norman Lamm, the president of Yeshiva University, was publicly castigated as a "hater of God." But he sidesteps the question of how he himself views such inflammatory talk, a doubly unfortunate omission since President Lamm's attacker was a rabbinic leader of the organization for which Rabbi Shafran serves as an official spokesman.

Going to great lengths to defend heads of yeshivas from my claim that they are "cushioned from reality," Rabbi Stolper, for his part, cites the great contributions of rabbis of the past generation to the growth of Torah studies in America. In so doing he inadvertently confirms my larger point, for he describes the previous generation as "eschew[ing] extremism of any kind." One is left wondering why so many current leaders, themselves the disciples of these distinguished rabbis, should have rejected their teachers' "ways of peace."

Rabbi Nosson Scherman takes exception to my description of the *haredi* leadership of the last generation as "immigrant rabbis," and then portrays quite movingly how these immigrants transformed American Orthodoxy. What divides us here, I suspect, is a matter of semantics, not substance. In using the term "immigrant rabbis" I did not intend to disparage but rather to note a shift of historic importance: in the decades bracketing the Holocaust, a new type of Jewish immigrant arrived on American shores, bringing a far more sophisticated repertoire of responses to modernity than had been the case with those who arrived at the turn of the 20th century.

Where Rabbi Scherman and I disagree is in our historical understanding of the way rabbis in ages past influenced their followers, in contrast to those 20th-century rabbinic figures who coined a new term, *daas Torah*, to justify a no less new mode of leadership. That mode of leadership relies far less on "going back to the text," as Rabbi Scherman has it, than on charismatic authority and intimidating social pressure in order to compel conformity with the rules of the *haredi* enclave.

Secrecy in Government

TO THE EDITOR:

In his generous if sometimes skeptical review of my book, *Secrecy: The American Experience* [December 1998], Richard Perle raises a number of good questions to which, just now, there may only be modestly good answers. I will attempt to answer one of them.

By the late 1940's, the Army Security Agency had begun to decipher KGB cable traffic that laid out much (we have to assume there was more) of the Soviet espionage activity of that era. Mr. Perle describes my "breathtaking revelation that even President Truman was kept in the dark about the decryptions." He asks, "Can this be true? Or is there some metasecret of which Moynihan, too, remains ignorant?"

There may be. But let me try to help. The decrypted cables, now known collectively as Venona, were released to the public in the course of the work of the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy, a statutory body created by legislation I introduced in 1994. I was chairman of the commission and have since stayed with the task of trying to enact the legislation we proposed.

Secrecy, I argue, is best understood as a mode of regulation, something Max Weber set forth ages ago. "Every bureaucracy," he wrote, "seeks to increase the superiority of the professionally informed by keeping their knowledge and intentions secret." I found myself asking if this could account for the inexplicable failure of the Truman administration to let the public know what the government knew, given the wild charges of that time that the government itself (Secretary of State George C. Marshall, for instance) had been compliant in Communist subversion.

Sure enough, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which had received regular briefings on the progress of the decryptions, came up with a cache of documents that appeared to explain it all—principally, a memorandum of October 18, 1949, relating the direct orders of General Omar Nelson Bradley, chairman of the newly-created Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the effect that responsibility for telling President Truman was his and his alone.

This fit my hypothesis—Venona was considered Army property. Furthermore, no evidence—none that I know of—shows that the President had *ever* been told, either by Bradley or anyone else. In 1953, Truman described the charges of Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers against Alger Hiss as statements made by a "crook and a louse." Venona showed the charges to be credible. If Truman had been told, would he have described Bentley and Chambers in such terms? Or—a more tantalizing question—if he had been told and had acted upon the knowledge, might we have been spared much of the travail we associate with the McCarthy era? And the awful attendant damage to liberalism?

The Venona project was at first housed in Arlington Hall, a girls' school across the river from Washington. The first major decryption—listing the names of atomic physicists at Los Alamos—took place December 20, 1946, the awesome achievement of cryptanalyst Meredith Knox Gardner. Looking over his shoulder was one William Weisband, a corporal, a cipher clerk, a KGB spy. Weisband was passing

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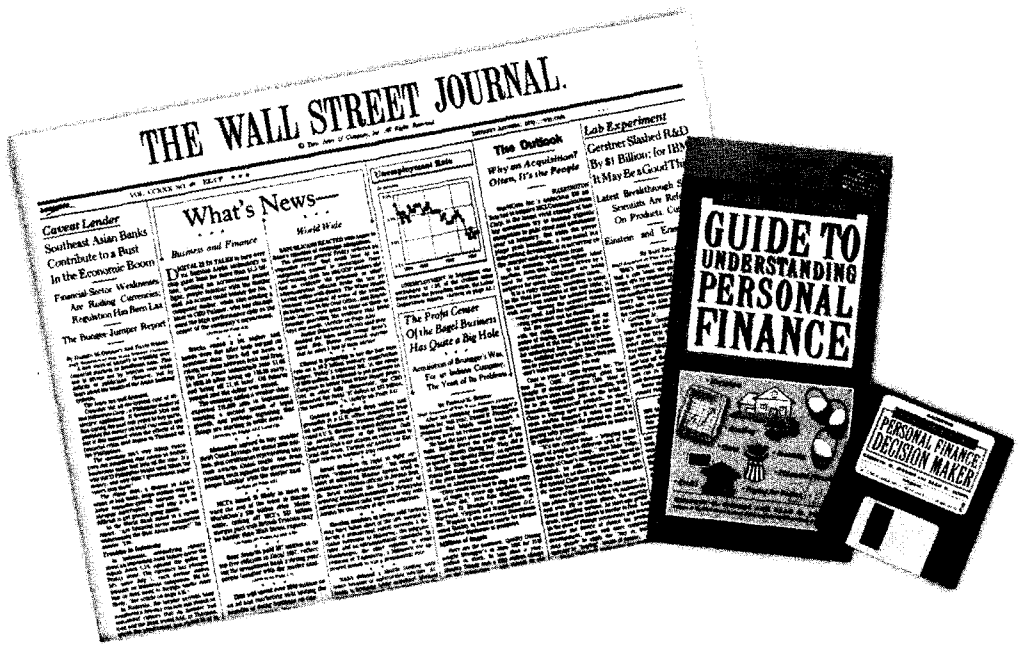

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along the decoded messages to Kim Philby over at the British embassy. Before long, April 1950, Weisband would be implicated by another Soviet agent. We now knew that they knew we knew.

It was surely important that the President know. Since the mid-1940's, J. Edgar Hoover had been sending to the President every lead suggesting Communist infiltration the Bureau came across—the absurd indistinguishable from the valid—to the effect that all went unheeded. Thus the case of Harry Dexter White. White had been Truman's selection to be executive director of the International Monetary Fund. Hoover had given repeated warning that White was suspected of being a spy, but in June 1946 Truman went ahead with the nomination. As Richard Gid Powers writes, "Truman knew that nearly every member of the New Deal administration had been accused of being a Communist; he knew that Hoover had carried many of these charges to the White House. Why should the Harry Dexter White case be any different?"

Hoover's warnings relied on testimony from Bentley and Chambers, not on evidence from Venona. Not until October 1950 would a decrypted cable confirm that White had in fact been a spy (cover-name Jurist), by which time White was long dead, Hoover had all but split from the administration (recall his appearance in 1947 before the House Un-American Activities Committee), and the Bureau had conceded responsibility for informing the President to General Bradley.

And so: why was the President not told? Or evidently not told?

Well, there you are, historians: get to work.

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

RICHARD PERLE writes:

In my review, I asked whether Daniel Patrick Moynihan's discovery that President Truman was kept in the dark about the Venona decryptions might someday be invalidated by the discovery of yet another secret: that the President was informed after all. The always open-minded Senator is wise to have added in his letter that this in fact "may be" the case.

May be, indeed. The March 1999 issue of the *Secrecy and Government Bulletin* (can we really have government secrecy in a country that allows such a journal?) reports that recently published FBI documents (especially a memo dated October 17, 1950) "indicate that information derived from Venona was in fact provided to the Truman White House."

Running to ground the specifics of one incident of the manipulation of secret information is undoubtedly interesting. But I would have much preferred to hear Senator Moynihan's reaction to my argument that he missed the essence of the most important intelligence failure of the cold war: the gross overestimation of Soviet economic strength and consequently of the USSR's potential to produce even more weaponry than it already possessed. This failure, caused in part by the secrecy with which intelligence was reviewed, led us to accept unfavorable arms-control arrangements out of a misplaced concern that only such agreements could prevent the Soviets from adding to their already formidable military machine. In fact, however, they ran the cold-war marathon at full speed; there were no sprints left to run. If we had known better at the time, Ronald Reagan's policy of pushing the Soviets to the wall might well have been adopted by his predecessors.

Racial Preferences

TO THE EDITOR:

In their article on William G. Bowen and Derek Bok's *The Shape of the River* ["Racial Preferences: What We Now Know," February], Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom make a number of telling points against the race-based admissions policies at America's elite universities and graduate schools. They are on firm ground when they claim that the degree of preference accorded to race at elite universities is much greater than proponents of race-based admissions often acknowledge; that those preferentially admitted often wind up near the bottom quarter of the graduating class and rarely display a "late-bloomer" effect; that most members of the black middle class made it into the middle class without attending elite universities and without receiving preferences in university admissions; and that race-based preferences in higher education have come to serve as a "pernicious palliative" that deflects attention away from the real problem, which is the huge gap in elementary- and secondary-school performance between black students and their white and Asian peers. On one point, however, the Thernstroms are on shaky ground, and on another, their criticism may be even more on target than they themselves recognize.

To begin with, the Thernstroms hold that one damaging effect of racial preferences is to place preferentially admitted students in elite educational institutions that are too competitive for them. They try to demonstrate this by pointing to the fact that at elite universities, according to Bowen and Bok's figures, the ratio of the black dropout rate (20.8 percent) to the white dropout rate (6.3 percent) is a much larger figure (3.3) than the comparable figure at the nation's less selective institutions.

But the dropout ratio is not really a useful figure in evaluating the standard "mismatch" argument. Whatever its limitations, the Bowen and Bok study does a commendable job in showing that *at any given SAT level*, black students have a *higher* probability of graduating from—and hence not dropping out of—an elite university than their black counterparts at lesser schools. To put the matter in more concrete terms: if you are a black senior at a typical middle-class suburban high school, have an A- average, scored 1275 on your SAT, and rank in the 85th percentile of your class, there are a number of concrete academic advantages that you will experience by accepting admission to a school like Harvard, Princeton, or Amherst rather than going to a school like Boston University, Rutgers, or Bucknell.

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Relying on the *ratio* of the black dropout rate to the white dropout rate makes no sense at all. It is like looking at state A, where the black unemployment rate is 25 percent and the white rate 10 percent, and concluding that it is a better place for black people to reside in than in state B, where the black unemployment rate is 12 percent and the white rate 3 percent, because state A's ratio of black-to-white unemployment (2.5) is much lower than state B's (4.0).

By contrast, the Thernstroms are most assuredly on-target when they speak of the stigmatizing effect that a regime of racial preferences has on those preferentially treated, and when they criticize the Bowen and Bok study for posing "flat-footed" questions that are poorly designed to assess the degree of this stigmatization. Indeed, as a piece of social-science research, this may be the greatest failing of *The Shape of the River*. It seems almost as if the two co-authors, together with their like-minded staff, huddled together one day at the initial stages of their project and said to themselves, in effect: "Let's gather as much data as we can to show how successful our black graduates have been. But we must be more cautious when it comes to assessing the attitudes and beliefs of our white and Asian graduates. So we should just ask a few puff questions—like, 'Isn't diversity a nice thing?,' or, 'Have you met any black people who like it at Harvard?'—and leave it at that."

This failure can be brought into even clearer light if we think of some of the trenchant questions regarding race and ethnicity that students might have been asked but were not. One can imagine, for instance, a question like the following:

> Did the typical African American student; Arab or Middle Eastern student; East Asian student; Euro-American student; Hispanic student; Jewish student strike you as: (a) *substantially better* than the average student at your college or university; (b) *slightly better* than the average student; (c) *about the same* as the average student; (d) *somewhat worse* than the average student; or (e) *very much worse* than the average student?

And on the specific issue of whether affirmative-action policies help to reinforce harmful stigmas of African Americans—the contention of virtually every black critic of such policies—Bowen and Bok might have asked a question like this:

> Based upon your personal experiences at your college or university, which of the following statements comes closest to your own assessment of the overall effect of the school's affirmative-action policy in undergraduate admissions: (a) the admissions policy has *helped to break down* negative stigmas and stereotypes concerning the academic capabilities of African Americans; (b) the admissions policy *has had little or no effect* in either reinforcing or breaking down negative stigmas and stereotypes concerning the academic capabilities of African Americans; (c) the admissions policy *has had a small but noticeable effect* in reinforcing negative stigmas and stereotypes; etc.

But no questions even remotely like these were asked in the Bowen and Bok survey—largely, it would seem, for fear of the answers.

The Thernstroms ask the hard questions in this regard, and though some of their work has struck me as needlessly testy or abrasive (an understandable reaction perhaps to the vicious attacks frequently made against them by their leftist opponents), we should all be grateful to have researchers of their caliber to keep otherwise decent people like William Bowen and Derek Bok honest.

RUSS NIELI
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom forcefully and convincingly refute the conclusions of the Bowen and Bok study. There is one point, however, that needs further elaboration: it is that preferential treatment is not limited to admissions, financial aid, or extra tutoring—it extends to evaluation and grading. Though hard to prove or quantify, "race-conscious" grading (that is, going easy on black students) is a fact of life, especially in the humanities, social sciences, and schools of education. It is very hard to know how many more black students would drop out if this were not the case. Such grading is usually motivated by compassion or sympathy or fear of being called a "racist" if black students were to do poorly in one's course. As the administrative pressures intensify to reduce dropout rates among blacks—the University of Pittsburgh, for example, recently proposed punishing departments that perform poorly in this regard by cutting their budgets—race-conscious grading is likely to persist and increase.

As to the occupational accomplishments of the beneficiaries of preferential treatment—which, according to Bowen and Bok, is the decisive proof that these policies work—there is substantial evidence to suggest that preferential treatment *continues* in hiring, retention, and promotion. It is indeed the fundamental flaw of preferential treatment that it never stops and therefore makes it difficult to assess (without the risk of being called a racist) the competence of black college or graduate-school graduates, or their job performance later on.

PAUL HOLLANDER
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom make a compelling case for the proposition that affirmative action has either played a minimal role in advancing middle-class African Americans or, as I am inclined to think, actually set them back by dampening their motivation, putting their actual achievement under suspicion, and worsening race relations on and off campus.

But the worst aspect of this social-engineering scheme is one the Thernstroms scarcely mention: the fearful cost in quality to practically the whole of higher education. My own experience at Stanford suggests that the decline has been quite steep. How can

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one estimate the damage done by politicization; by fanatic administrators telling instructors to reshape their thinking and courses—or else; by the demoting of Shakespeare, Aristotle, and other classic figures; and by the uglified atmosphere in class, including outright threats from students?

Another field of investigation left largely fallow by the Thernstroms is the conspiracy among administrators in schools and corporations to make themselves look good in terms of racial numbers, something they do in order to conform to governmental and liberal pressures. Over many years the instances of winked-at incompetence have multiplied. Obviously, people are reluctant to speak openly of this "sentimental lie" (Joseph Conrad) blighting our society.

ROBERT GREER COHN
Stanford University
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR:

It may well be, as Bowen and Bok argue in *The Shape of the River*, that "racially-sensitive" admissions policies reduce the national inequality in income and influence between blacks and whites. Against this one benefit, however, are some costs of affirmative action that their book should have weighed and did not.

In the first place, the national rule prohibiting racial discrimination has been suspended in an important area of American life—a rule that is our best-known defense against the historical tendency of racial favoritism to produce racial partisanship, prejudice, hatred, injustice, oppression, and war. By the example of our leading colleges and universities, blacks and Hispanics are taught that discrimination in their behalf is not only permissible but praiseworthy, a lesson they increasingly feel free to apply in their own conduct.

Moreover, having been installed for the admission of students (and the employment of faculty and staff), racial preferences have now invaded course content. In literature, history, and sociology, considerations of racial representation and balance influence which authors are assigned and which people and problems are studied. The quality of work has declined, too, as the less able have displaced the more able.

Finally, the pretense that no substantial discrimination by race or sacrifice of quality occurs under affirmative action has spawned decades of evasion, equivocation, and duplicity by its academic sponsors. Such conduct corrupts as surely as the evils it tries to conceal.

CURTIS CRAWFORD
Charlottesville, Virginia

STEPHAN AND ABIGAIL THERNSTROM write:

William G. Bowen and Derek Bok note that black graduation rates at the elite colleges they studied are high. We examined the other side of the coin—the dropout rates—and found a much more sobering picture. Russ Nieli's thoughtful letter does raise an interesting question. If the black student with a high-school grade-point average of A- and an SAT score of 1275 is more likely to graduate from Princeton than Rutgers, is he not better off at the more selective school?

In fact, however, it is impossible to know whether the high-scoring black youngster admitted to Princeton has a better chance of getting a B.A. than he would have had at a lesser school. Quite the opposite might be the case. Almost 21 percent of Bowen and Bok's 1989 sample failed to graduate. All the black students admitted to one of their highly selective schools had much more going for them than solid grades and scores. Other qualities—intangibles like "leadership," extraordinary personal discipline, and the like—singled them out. With a proper control group, we might find that 100 percent of such students graduate from a school like Rutgers, whereas the figure is only 80 percent for Bowen and Bok's elite institutions.

In addition, a black dropout rate more than triple the rate for whites is part of a larger "mismatch" picture. The cumulative grade-point average of African-American students at the Bowen and Bok schools puts them in the bottom quarter of their class. And the combination of significantly higher dropout rates and underachievement surely perpetuates stigmatizing myths about black academic talent. When few Jews could get into the Ivy League schools, and Jewish students had to be superqualified to gain admission, a Jewish stereotype was created: Jews are smart. Admitting black students by *lower* standards has precisely the opposite effect: it reinforces the pernicious notion that blacks are not academically talented.

Obviously, we do agree with Mr. Nieli that Bowen and Bok's survey of student opinion leaves much to be desired. They posed questions patently designed to elicit the responses they hoped for, and the alternative ones sketched by him would have been far better. We deal with this issue at greater length in a much more detailed appraisal of the book that will appear in the June 1999 issue of the *UCLA Law Review*.

Paul Hollander and Robert Greer Cohn raise the troubling issue of "race-conscious" grading. As Mr. Hollander notes, this is a matter that is "hard to prove or quantify," but it squares with anecdotal evidence we have seen. Certainly the recent dictate by the University of Pittsburgh administration that programs that fail to equalize graduation rates by race will be penalized financially is likely to encourage precisely such double standards in grading, thus calling into question the achievements of outstanding minority students who did not need preferential treatment to do well. The widespread practice of minority quotas on law reviews is another deplorable and counterproductive example of the same phenomenon.

Curtis Crawford and Mr. Cohn both eloquently trace some of the other damaging consequences of racial preferences in higher education. Again, we agree fully.

Isaiah Berlin

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz has done a great service in bringing into focus the issue that divides the admirers and the critics of Isaiah Berlin ["A Dissent on Isaiah Berlin," February]. Nobody should doubt Berlin's stature as a historian of ideas

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and as a vital and original presence in postwar British culture. But, as Mr. Podhoretz says, Berlin hesitated to speak out against the Left, knowing that one could not advance in British intellectual society without the support of leftists and Marxists. He silently connived at the movements that have given second-rate egalitarians so loud a voice in our national culture. And for all his attitude of lofty toleration, he never showed toward intellectual conservatives any of the ingratiating favor that he displayed toward their opponents.

In this, however, he was an apt representative of the times in which he lived. His powerful position—as president of the British Academy, fellow of All Souls College at Oxford, arbiter of important chairs and prizes, and friend and counselor of the Great and the Good—should not be discounted by the historian of our epoch when considering how it is that England, a country with an unbroken tradition of conservative thought and politics, should have acquired in our time a left-wing intellectual establishment.

I am reliably informed that Berlin's response to me, in which, as Mr. Podhoretz writes, he likened me to Dr. Goebbels, preceded the act of *lèse-majesté* in which I publicly confessed to certain doubts about his reputation. This knee-jerk hostility is to be regretted, not only because it undermines intellectual freedom but because it reduces the stature of a truly imaginative thinker. Had he been honest with himself, Berlin would have agreed far more with things that Norman Podhoretz and I have written than with anything written by those who most enjoyed his protection.

Now that Mr. Podhoretz has set the record straight, we should try to see Isaiah Berlin in perspective. We should do him the favor of admiring what was truly admirable in his far-ranging intellect, and we should examine his essays not for the real but for the ideal character of the man who wrote them.

ROGER SCRUTON
Brinkworth, England

TO THE EDITOR:

Although he recognizes and appreciates some of the qualities that made Isaiah Berlin such a highly regarded intellectual historian, Norman Podhoretz fails to do justice to the depth and scope of Berlin's idea of "pluralism." Berlin's emphasis on the fact that we have many different goals and basic values, and that they are "incommensurable" and in "perpetual rivalry with one another," is not merely a way to distinguish a democratic from a totalitarian society. It is also a challenge to traditional liberalism. For one liberal assumption, inherited from the Enlightenment, is that our highest values—liberty, equality, individual responsibility and social justice, truth and kindness—can be reconciled. If these values and goals are in "perpetual rivalry," the very idea of a just society is not only im-

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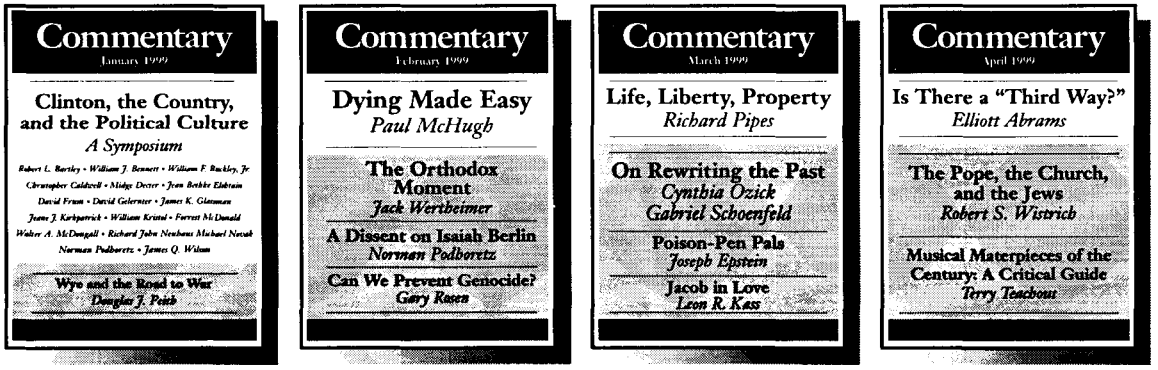

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possible but, as Berlin wrote, "intellectually incoherent."

What is even more significant, at least for those who share liberal values, is that Berlin showed us how to meet this challenge with another important idea, namely, that we should not ask philosophers to give us a picture of the perfect society. This idea may seem obvious now, but no one else developed it with such deep understanding of the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of the grand theories of progress. That today almost every political philosopher, and certainly those who deserve to be taken seriously, has given up the expectation that society will change in accordance to some rational idea is a tribute to Berlin.

He is also valuable for his eloquent and reasoned presentation of the contingency of our values. We must give up, he wrote, "the very desire for guarantees that our values are eternal." This desire may satisfy "an incurable metaphysical need," but to thoughtful people, it is a symptom of "moral and political immaturity."

For Mr. Podhoretz, such assertions are evidence that Berlin "knew that he had never really found a philosophical way of immunizing [pluralism] against the ravages of relativism." But such an accusation misses the main point. Because our values come out of human experience and not from the minds of philosophers or theologians, it is not possible to prove that they are eternal or absolute. If one finds a moral principle that commands the assent of all reasonable human beings, the principle will be so general that it can be applied differently by different people, whereas a moral principle that is specific will be rejected by some. This can easily be seen whenever there is a debate about human rights among nations.

Mr. Podhoretz has a right to call this explanation relativistic, but he should also recognize that this relativism is in keeping with Isaiah Berlin's desire to be as realistic as possible, even when it means giving up the illusions that make us comfortable.

LAWRENCE HYMAN
Ridgewood, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz mentions Isaiah Berlin's presence during World War II at the British embassy in Washington. His reports from the U.S. were indeed brilliant, but they were also biased. This was the time of the great struggle for the creation of the Jewish state, and Berlin was very critical of the militant role played by the Zionist Organization of America and its leaders, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Emanuel Neumann. Berlin was an unconditional supporter of the accommodationist line taken by Chaim Weizmann.

JACQUES TORCZYNER
Honorary President
Zionist Organization of America
Walnut Creek, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I found Norman Podhoretz's marvelous analysis of Isaiah Berlin very convincing. Having been in academia for more than 45 years, I have seen many intellectually cowardly professors at close range—they want to be respected, if not liked and admired, by their colleagues and students. Unwilling as Berlin was to lose invitations to elite social gatherings, as Mr. Podhoretz argues, he was, I suspect, even more unwilling to pay the price of standing up for his convictions, namely, unpopularity at Oxford.

JACKSON TOBY
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's "dissent" on Isaiah Berlin is a fine thing. I never thought I would see its like in an important journal of opinion.

PAUL R. GROSS
Warwick, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's article is super—*tout juste*.

DAVID S. LANDES
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's "dissent" on Isaiah Berlin is extremely well done. It will stand as one of the very few pieces that have dared to tell the truth about that great sage.

ROGER KIMBALL
New Criterion
New York City

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

What is most interesting—and to me amazing—about the response to my essay on Isaiah Berlin is reflected in the letters above by the fact that, instead of the storm of indignation I expected, only one of them, by Lawrence Hyman, rises to Berlin's defense. But even this is merely a dim reflection of that extraordinary fact. For I received two dozen or so additional private communications about the piece, either by phone or in conversation or by letter, and of those, too, all but one expressed the same agreement with my "dissent" as well as the same relief at the publication of such a piece about Berlin. And since even the author of that one private letter retracted after I wrote back, Mr. Hyman remains out there all by himself.

Evidently, then, the near-beatification of Isaiah Berlin, which began in his lifetime and has continued almost without letup since his death, did not reflect the true range of sentiment about his work. Or, to put it another way, there seems to be a strong "the emperor has no clothes" feeling about Berlin. This is far from meaning, as Roger Scruton rightly stresses (and as I took pains to acknowledge myself), that Berlin's work has no value; it means only that he has been wildly overrated for some of the reasons I tried to spell out.

Needless to say, in addition to being amazed by this response, I was very pleased by it, and I am grateful to all those who took the trouble to communicate their agreement to me. I also feel a certain reluctance to argue with the lone dissenter on my dissent: within the bounds of these columns at least (if not in the world at large), it would look like ganging up. So I will confine my rebuttal on the issue of relativism to pointing once again—as I did in my article—at the words of Joseph Schumpeter and Chaim Weizmann that Berlin himself quotes about the overriding moral obligation to take a stand even when one is uncertain about the absolute truth of one's principles, and his own repeated failures to do just

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that, especially in the charged political contexts to which Mr. Scruton and Jackson Toby allude.

Preventing Genocide

TO THE EDITOR:

It is a good thing that Gary Rosen phrases his question—"Can We Prevent Genocide?" [February]—as a rhetorical one. He finds it difficult to draw any concrete conclusions as to how the West, and especially the United States, should respond. Mr. Rosen recognizes, on the one hand, the huge problem for our Presidents of rationalizing American body bags as the price of a moral commitment—to say nothing of the peril to their own political careers. On the other hand, he realizes that it goes against American principles to allow genocide to proceed without interference and punishment.

I cannot blame Mr. Rosen. This is a very sticky wicket indeed. But the truth of the matter is that the question can only be rhetorical. Average Americans do not give a damn about genocide unless, of course, it affects them personally. Why should any country sacrifice its young men and women on the altar of morality when there are more important problems around, like putting bread on the table and raising children? Put bluntly, it's the economy, stupid. Threaten it and the people will absolutely rouse themselves.

STANLEY P. KESSEL
Hollywood, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Can We Prevent Genocide?," Gary Rosen makes a number of interesting observations about the Rwanda episode, but leaves out one central ingredient. The French, who armed, trained, and backed the Hutu *génocidaires*, were motivated by a paranoid Quai d'Orsay belief that the "Anglo-Saxons" were engaged in a plot, with the Tutsis as cat's-paws, to replace Francophone influence in that part of Africa. French support (managed by Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, son of the late President of France) in fact prolonged the genocide and made possible the later regrouping of the culprits in Zaire.

This appalling episode is described in grim detail by the ex-president of *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF), Rony Brauman, in a little book, *Devant le mal*, which has yet to appear in English. MSF was the only one of many aid groups then active in Rwanda to call (in vain) for active military involvement to stop or at least impede the genocide.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

GARY ROSEN writes:

It is hard to say whether Stanley P. Kessel thinks that the American public *should* not accept an aggressive U.S. posture against genocide or simply *would* not even if presented with the option. In either case, I believe that he is wrong. As I argued in my article, politicians and policy-makers grossly underestimate the willingness of the American people to stand up for principle in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, especially when principle can be defended at a reasonable cost—as it almost certainly could have been in both Rwanda and Bosnia.

Herb Greer is right to emphasize the despicable role played by the French in the Rwandan genocide, but this hardly went unmentioned in my piece. The French, I wrote, "happily parroted the propaganda of their Francophone Hutu clients . . . and mounted a military expedition to Rwanda, pledging impartiality but in fact briefly extending the life of the murderous regime."

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Commentary
May 1999

The War on the War on Crime

Arch Puddington

In the post-midnight hours of February 4, a young immigrant named Amadou Diallo from the African country of Guinea was about to enter his Bronx apartment building when he was approached by four plainclothes New York City police officers. The police were looking for a serial rapist who had assaulted some 40 women in minority neighborhoods in the Bronx and northern Manhattan. According to press accounts, the officers believed that Diallo bore a resemblance to sketch drawings of the rapist. What transpired next—whether the police identified themselves, whether Diallo understood them, whether his movements led them to conclude he was reaching for a weapon—has still not been made clear. There is no question, however, about the reaction of the police. All four drew their guns and fired a total of 41 shots. Nineteen bullets struck Diallo, killing him instantly.

This shooting has, in a few short months, had a profound effect on New York. It has raised fundamental questions about how the New York City Police Department (NYPD) carries out its work in minority communities. It has called into doubt the various innovative policing strategies that over the past decade have contributed greatly to the astonishing decline in crime in New York. And it has brought down a hailstorm of opprobrium on Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, provoking the most serious race-relations crisis since the Crown Heights riots of 1991 and threatening a reversion to the political turmoil of an earlier day.

Arch Puddington *is vice president for research at Freedom House. His history of Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty is forthcoming from the University of Kentucky Press.*

What happened on the night of February 4 and thereafter?

Within minutes, if not seconds, the four officers discovered they had made a terrible mistake. Diallo was unarmed; his pockets contained only keys and a beeper. A subsequent investigation would reveal that he had no police record. Although, in order to gain admission to the United States, he had falsely claimed to have been persecuted in Mauritania, he was otherwise an upstanding young man who worked long hours as a street vendor while studying to acquire the high-school credits to enroll in an American university.

It did not take long before angry reactions to the shooting were voiced by the mayor's many critics. First and foremost among these was the Reverend Al Sharpton, a figure notorious to New Yorkers for his role in the 1987 hoax in which a young black girl named Tawana Brawley falsely accused a group of white men, including an upstate assistant district attorney, of having raped her. Now, almost immediately after the first reports of the Diallo shooting, Sharpton began to stage daily demonstrations in a variety of locales.

There were protests at the Bronx courthouse

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where a grand jury was investigating the conduct of the police; acts of civil disobedience at a Wall Street brokerage firm; and demonstrations at City Hall featuring speeches by "representatives" of violent youth gangs like the Crips, Bloods, and Latin Kings. For weeks, the city witnessed one staged event after another in a choreographed drive to show that black New York was in a state of outrage. The campaign reached its climax with a series of sit-ins in which dozens of minority politicians, including former Mayor David Dinkins, deliberately blocked the entranceway to the city's central police headquarters and were arrested with television cameras in tow. They were quickly joined by other figures, black and white alike, from the city's various constituencies of "conscience."

To be sure, relations between Giuliani and New York's minority political leadership had been uneasy ever since his election in 1993. A Republican in an overwhelmingly Democratic city, Giuliani had defeated the incumbent David Dinkins in a vote reflecting a city that had become polarized along racial lines. Once in office, moreover, Giuliani had infuriated many of the city's black and Hispanic figures by refusing to play by the prevailing rules. In a pointed rebuke of the racial spoils system honored by previous administrations, he adopted the new slogan of "one city, one standard," moved to cut back a number of city programs that operated according to a system of racial preferences, and shut down the office that had served as a liaison between the previous administration and the city's ethnic constituency groups.

At the time, critics excoriated these steps as a sign of Giuliani's insensitivity to matters racial. Giuliani, for his part, insisted that, to the contrary, his predecessor's habit of catering to or appeasing extremist elements had itself contributed to the deterioration of intergroup relations in New York. Wherever the exact truth lay, the remarkable thing was that Giuliani's new strategy paid off, and almost instantaneously. While a highly vocal group of minority political leaders never ceased attacking him, and while there were several charged racial incidents—including the 1995 torching of Freddy's, a Jewish-owned clothing store in Harlem, that took the lives of seven people, and the brutalization of Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, at the hands of the police in Brooklyn in 1997—up until the Diallo affair New York under Giuliani was largely spared the kind of bitter racial antagonism that had so traumatized the city under Dinkins's tenure in office.

But now, in the wake of the Diallo shooting, the arrows began to fly once again—and from all sides. In addition to Sharpton and his immediate circle, members of the U.S. congressional black caucus, national civil-rights leaders, prominent civil libertarians, Hollywood stars, and radical left-wing activists all descended on New York to denounce the mayor as autocratic, out of touch, cruel, indifferent, and intemperate. Even George Pataki, the state's Republican governor, chimed in, charging that the Giuliani administration was not "responding appropriately" to the matter.

THE SPECIFIC object of the protesters' wrath was the New York City Police Department—and, by extension, the city's criminal-justice system as a whole. Congressman John Conyers, a Michigan Democrat, called the city "way out in front in police brutality." The Reverend Jesse Jackson compared the Diallo case to the lynching of Emmitt Till, a young black man whose death at the hands of a Mississippi mob in the 1950's became an emblem of Southern racial injustice. The same analogy was employed by Ira Glasser, director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who declared Amadou Diallo the victim of "Jim-Crow justice."

The agent of this system of Jim-Crow justice was said to be New York's much-publicized crackdown on "quality-of-life" offenses, a strategy largely put into place by Giuliani's former police commissioner William Bratton. For several years now, this strategy has seen the daily arrest of hundreds of New Yorkers for drinking or smoking marijuana in public, subway-fare beating, reckless bicycle riding, and the like; it has also brought to light huge numbers of concealed and illegal weapons, often in the hands of people with outstanding warrants for more serious offenses. The most zealous prosecutors of the new policy have been the members of NYPD's street-crime unit, an elite group of undercover officers deployed in high-crime neighborhoods. Given a broad mandate to take measures to stop crime before it occurs, officers in this unit (among their number were the four who shot Diallo) scour the streets seeking out those who prey on cab drivers, prostitutes, and small businessmen.

Here we approach the nub of the indictment. To Giuliani's critics, the assertive tactics and high motivation of the street-crime unit—Howard Safir, the present police commissioner, has said he would like to bottle the unit's enthusiasm and compel the rest of the force to drink it—are precisely the problem. A statistic they cite again and again is that while, in 1997 and 1998, the unit stopped and

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searched some 45,000 people, primarily in minority neighborhoods, arrests were made only in some 9,500 cases. To black and Hispanic politicians, these figures suggest that large numbers of innocent people are being singled out for random and arbitrary abuse. The name given to this abuse is "racial profiling," i.e., deliberately targeting nonwhites for stop-and-search encounters without reasonable grounds for suspicion.

If racial profiling is one sin, the NYPD is also under assault for failing to make its ranks representative of the city's "gorgeous mosaic" (to use the phrase invoked frequently in his time by David Dinkins). Sixty-eight percent of the police force is white, say the critics, while 60 percent of the city is not. The *New York Times* has weighed in heavily on this issue, reporting that the city "lags" behind almost all other large municipalities in achieving "diversity" in its police force; among big cities, only such predominantly white urban centers as San Diego and Phoenix have a lower percentage of minority officers.

Given the array of charges being hurled in the air in the wake of the Diallo shooting, it is hardly surprising that demands began to be voiced for state and federal intervention. President Clinton devoted a nationwide radio address to the issue, declaring himself "deeply disturbed by recent allegations of serious police misconduct and continued reports of racial profiling." Three separate investigations into New York policing practices soon got under way. One is on the state level, with New York's newly elected attorney general, Eliot Spitzer, looking into the NYPD's stop-and-frisk policies. On the federal level, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission plans to hold hearings and gather information on a wide range of policing issues, while the Justice Department is expanding its investigation of the Abner Louima incident into a broader citywide inquiry. The aim of this last inquiry is to determine whether the police, and especially the street-crime unit, are guilty of systematically violating the rights of New York's minority citizens.

Does New York City have a problem of police brutality? It would, if there were any truth at all to the glib comparisons of the Diallo case to the persecution of Southern blacks in the pre-civil-rights era, or, in another favorite trope, of Mayor Giuliani to Adolf Hitler. But the very opposite is the case: during the Giuliani years, right along with the precipitous drop in crime rates, there has been a *decline* in violence involving police and civilians. In 1998, the number of fatal police shootings was at its lowest level since 1985 and at less than half the level of 1990 when David Dinkins was in office. New York's record is impressive not only in itself but as compared with other major cities. Miami's rate of police shootings in 1998 was four times higher than New York's; in Washington, D.C., which has a predominantly minority police force, the rate was six times higher.

As for the four officers in the Diallo case, who have been indicted by a grand jury on second-degree murder charges, no evidence has been put forward to support the repeated charge that they acted out of racism. It is true that all four are white, and that one of them had previously been involved in the shooting of a suspect but has since been cleared. Otherwise, there seems to be nothing unusual or incriminating in their backgrounds—no reports of racial prejudice, no charges of brutality, nothing to suggest that they have been anything but model officers. Indeed, eyewitnesses at the shooting scene described the four as dazed and anguished at discovering they had killed an unarmed man, and all of them were hospitalized for trauma on the night of the incident.

This is hardly to deny that New York, like all cities, continues to experience controversial instances of police shootings, or that such shootings often involve white officers and black or Hispanic youths. Given the disproportionate involvement of the latter groups in street crimes, however, that is as inevitable as it is unfortunate. Completely ignored in the post-Diallo furor was the fact that, while blacks make up 13 percent of the American population, they comprise over half the arrests for murder and robbery, over 40 percent of the arrests for rape and car theft, and over 30 percent for burglary. These are *national* figures; for New York, the figures are even higher.

By its very nature, effective law enforcement will always be concentrated in high-crime neighborhoods, which in a city like New York means minority neighborhoods. This in itself suggests the emptiness of the charge that the NYPD engages in systematic "racial profiling." As Michael Hess, the city's chief attorney, has frankly and truthfully put it, "If minority communities are to be properly protected, the stop-and-frisks must take place in those communities."

It is a measure of today's climate of political correctness that such a simple, commonsense observation can put one at risk of denunciation for racism. Indeed, just weeks after the Diallo incident, the New Jersey state police chief, Carl A. Williams, was forced from office for speaking in an interview

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about the link between certain ethnic groups and the drug trade. To New Jersey's civil-rights leadership, his remarks were clear evidence of a racist mindset—"the tip of the iceberg," in the words of one black state legislator, "of the apparent racist administration of the state police." Governor Christine Todd Whitman dismissed Williams the day after the interview was published.

What had Williams said? Only that it was naive to think the police could effectively enforce laws against drug trafficking without taking into account the ethnicity of those who control the narcotics trade. "Two weeks ago the President of the United States went to Mexico to talk to the president of Mexico about drugs," Williams noted. "He didn't go to Ireland. He didn't go to England." Williams then provided an equal-opportunity list of the groups involved in this activity. Trade in methamphetamines, he said, was controlled by white motorcycle gangs; Jamaicans dominated heroin traffic; American blacks and certain Hispanic and Caribbean groups led in the smuggling of marijuana and cocaine.

Williams's comments were not made on the basis of prejudice. His identification of particular ethnic groups with particular aspects of the drug trade was taken virtually verbatim from a study that had been compiled by the various federal agencies involved in the enforcement of drug laws and that was submitted by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to the White House in 1996, where it was received without a word of criticism. By the standards of today's racial debate, the Clinton administration's DEA report might itself be deemed a prime example of racial profiling. Of course, it is but a statement of fact.

Another consideration is relevant here, though it too has been sedulously ignored. This is that polling data show many black Americans inclined to see racism not only among the police but in virtually every aspect of American life. A disturbing percentage believes that the AIDS virus was invented to decimate the black population, that crack cocaine was introduced into the black community by a white conspiracy involving the Central Intelligence Agency, and that there is a white plot to destroy young black men. Even blacks who reject such paranoid fantasies often claim to see prejudice behind the casual phrase of a co-worker, a teacher's body language, or a store owner's abrupt manner.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that blacks should be convinced they are the targets of a pervasive form of police racism, and in particular that the stop-and frisk tactics employed by the street-crime unit have been designed to humiliate the innocent rather than to snare the criminal. Such sentiments are reinforced by the indiscriminate anti-police rhetoric voiced by Jesse Jackson and other black leaders. But they bear as little relation to reality as the idea that Rudolph Giuliani is the reincarnation of Hitler or Bull Connor.

IF THE critics' diagnosis of the NYPD problems is without merit, so too are the remedies on offer. One such remedy, advanced by Congressman José Serrano of the Bronx, is mandatory ethnic sensitivity training for all members of the police force. This idea, perhaps harmless in itself, is also nonsensical. New York is home to over 100 ethnic and immigrant groups. Amadou Diallo's native Guinea has its own cultural traditions, distinct from those of other West African societies, let alone from those of American blacks. Just as no course in sensitivity training could hope to acquaint police officers with the wildly disparate styles they are likely to encounter in the course of a week's patrol, there is little chance that sensitivity training would be of any use whatsoever in crisis situations requiring a split-second decision to shoot or not to shoot.

A more serious proposal is to step up affirmative-action programs within the NYPD itself, with the aim of recruiting more officers from minority communities. Another, reflecting the same impulse, is to require police officers to live in the city they serve. "There's a great possibility that people who not only live in the city but live in a particular neighborhood will understand the particular people in that neighborhood," asserts Norman Siegel, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) and one of Giuliani's most vociferous critics.

Other things being equal, it is no doubt desirable that a police force broadly reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the community it patrols. But there is no evidence *at all* that affirmative action actually improves the quality of police work; that minority police officers are less prone to misconduct than white officers; or that police who live in the city or the neighborhood they patrol are more effective than police who live in the suburbs. The New York Civilian Complaint Review Board has received proportionately the same number of complaints filed by minority citizens against minority officers as by minority citizens against white officers. Worse still, cities like Detroit and Washington, D.C., that have undertaken highly aggressive affirmative-action programs have experienced

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problems with misconduct and incompetence as standards have been lowered to bring minority officers into the ranks.

This, however, is another of today's taboo subjects—which is why one would be hard put to name a single instance in which the killing or beating of innocent black civilians by black officers has been made an object of press scrutiny or organized protest. Several years ago, a black officer shot and killed a young boy while patrolling a Brooklyn housing project. Residents described the officer as nervous and quick to draw his gun, but the story died after a few days with no demands for a grand-jury investigation or—needless to say—Justice Department intervention, and no demonstrations of outrage led by the likes of Al Sharpton. Nor was anger voiced when, more recently, a group of black off-duty officers chased and severely beat a busboy after a night of heavy drinking at a Brooklyn nightclub. Fleeing the officers in terror, the man perished after falling or jumping beneath a subway train.

What all this suggests is that something is going on in the current tumult in New York besides a concern over alleged police brutality. In fact, while the protesters have demanded more "dialogue" between city authorities and minority communities, there is reason to doubt that more openness is what they really want. Some seem determined simply to embarrass and discredit Giuliani, whose approval ratings until the Diallo incident had been remarkably high for a second-term mayor. For such people, even a conciliatory Giuliani is a Giuliani they cannot abide. When, toward the end of March, the mayor made several overtures to black politicians and public figures who had been among his most bitter adversaries, his good faith was immediately questioned and his motives denounced.

Others have found in the Diallo case a golden opportunity to advance their own faltering personal fortunes. It was only a year ago, after all, that Sharpton lost the civil suit brought against him in the Tawana Brawley hoax. Even before the facts were definitively established in court, his reputation had suffered grievously, not only on account of his part in encouraging Brawley to hold to her patently false account but on account of the (literally) incendiary role he had played in organizing protests against Freddy's discount store in 1995. With his defeat in court, it seemed that Sharpton might at last be down for the count. Instead, by skillfully exploiting the Diallo case, he has managed to stage a comeback, and is now treated with deference by mainstream members of the civil-rights community and centrist elected officials alike.

Yet Sharpton's agenda in the current campaign is, if anything, even more insidious than during the Brawley controversy. In the narrowest terms, he sees the protests as a vehicle through which to inject an element of racial intimidation into the legal proceedings against the four officers who were involved in the shooting. From the outset, when he loudly demanded their dismissal and arrest even before the grand jury was empaneled, he has attempted to create an environment in which failure to convict the officers will be interpreted as a miscarriage of justice that will surely lead to dire consequences for the city—i.e., race riots. That respectable politicians like former mayors Edward I. Koch and David Dinkins should have allied themselves with this ugly campaign is one of the most disturbing aspects of the entire affair.

The rehabilitation of Al Sharpton and the ease with which he is pursuing a racial shakedown policy in New York are troubling enough. But in the movement sparked by the Diallo affair, a larger agenda is being advanced as well, one that threatens to have the most baneful consequences not only for the city in general but for its minority inhabitants in particular. Pushing this agenda are liberals unhappy with the direction of law enforcement under Giuliani and convinced, against a mountain of evidence to the contrary, that the way to fight crime is to direct one's energies not at crime itself but at its alleged "root causes" in poverty and racism.

Over the past decade or so, root-cause liberals, to borrow the term of the criminologist George L. Kelling, have been on the defensive. New techniques of policing, techniques that they opposed at every turn, have proved wonderfully effective in reducing urban violent crime. Now, with the Diallo affair, root-cause liberals see a chance to press for a reversal of current policies and simultaneously to destroy the elected official most closely identified with them.

Among the most active and influential bodies in this regard is the New York Civil Liberties Union under Norman Siegel. The NYCLU has repeatedly attacked the city's new policing strategies as a threat to basic constitutional rights, reserving its harshest comments for the zero-tolerance approach toward minor, quality-of-life offenses. In its evocations of life in New York under Mayor Giuliani one cannot help hearing the word "fascism" lurking, all

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but unspoken, in the background. As one civil-liberties attorney, Richard Emery, has conjured up the supposed threat to ordinary citizens, "Zero tolerance means that only obsequious people, people willing to be searched and manhandled, can walk the streets."

This vision of New York as a kind of mini-police state is itself a throwback to an earlier age when such talk was common—and when the assault on institutional authority really did lead to a breakdown of order. In the 1960's and 70's, black radicals and their white liberal sympathizers, aided by a series of Supreme Court decisions significantly broadening the legal rights of criminal defendants, successfully intimidated any politicians who dared raise concerns about street crime. In this atmosphere, law-enforcement authorities themselves began to express defeatist attitudes, to believe and even to act as if the war on crime could never be won.

A legal and cultural transformation was required before the results of this breakdown could at last begin to be undone. But it was not until the late 1980's and early 1990's, thanks in large part to the election of a new breed of urban mayors, that a change came to be registered in the ever-climbing rates of murders, assaults, rapes, and other violent offenses devastating America's cities. Although the tale has been told often enough, perhaps the most important consequence of the new and more assertive war on crime championed by Giuliani and others is still not sufficiently appreciated: namely, the massive decrease in violent crime *in minority neighborhoods*.

This is again a national phenomenon, but again New York led the way. If murders committed with a firearm in New York City dropped from an all-time high of 1,605 in 1991 to 375 in 1998—a decline of 77 percent—in the precinct where Amadou Diallo lived, murders were down by a stunning 81 percent. Similar figures have been recorded in other neighborhoods whose very names were once synonymous with violent crime. Although one would hardly know it from the avalanche of condemnation it has evoked in the wake of the Diallo affair, the NYPD street-crime unit played a central role in this drastic reduction.

AROUND THE time of the Diallo shooting, it was announced that, for the first time in years, all five boroughs of New York City were experiencing an increase in population. This development, attributable in large measure to the civility and order that have been restored to the city's streets during Giuliani's tenure, is a vivid reminder of the high stakes involved in the current debate over race and law enforcement. In the avalanche of anti-police invective, it is easy to forget that today, for the first time in decades, law-abiding minority citizens can go shopping, visit friends, or conduct business in an environment of relative security. The measure of order now prevailing in Harlem, the South Bronx, and other neighborhoods that not long ago were completely written off has laid a foundation for the economic revival they are now experiencing.

If those who believe that the police, not the criminals, pose the major threat in New York are permitted to succeed in their campaign to undo what has been accomplished over the last years, all New Yorkers will pay a price, but black and Hispanic neighborhoods will pay the highest price of all. Already in the month of March, as the street-crime unit backed off its assertive tactics in the wake of the post-Diallo protests, crime and murder rates in minority neighborhoods shot up again. This and much worse is what awaits unless those determined to drag us back into the anarchy of the past are firmly repudiated.

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America's Muslims Against America's Jews

Daniel Pipes

On March 1, 1999, a federal district court in Brooklyn sentenced one Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar, late of Hebron, to life imprisonment. His crime: conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction, threatening to do so, and carrying the device itself. Although Abu Maizar had not actually harmed anyone, when the police raided his apartment on July 31, 1997, they found plenty of evidence that the twenty-three-year-old was on the verge of setting off a pipe bomb later that same day.

Oddly, the verdict attracted almost no attention. In the *New York Times*, it was reported on page 5 of the second section, below the fold. No editorials were written, no politicians spoke for the record, no ads appeared to express relief that justice had been done. A foiled attempt at mass murder by a Muslim in New York was, it would seem, less than newsworthy.

This is very puzzling, and very disturbing. For Abu Maizar's intended crime was, in fact, no isolated phenomenon; nor was it the product of a merely personal derangement, the act of a lone individual frustrated with his lot and lashing out at "the world." Here, complete with errors of spelling and grammar, are excerpts from the typewritten letter the police found in his apartment. Captioned "In the name of the Gade [God]," it was addressed to "the united states of america and U.S.A. citizens":

> no podey [nobody] can wein [win] the ware [war] against Islam and we are warring. . . . We are ready by our soul-blood boombes [bombs] to deines [for whoever denies] our gouls [goals] . . . we are going to buarn [burn] the ground under the america and Jewish stat[e]. . . . Our request shoud [should] be done on our mujjahiddeenis [warriors] ready to hit every where by they [the] suuisid [suicide] boomb [bomb].

The letter was signed "Alljeihd [the jihad] for all agssa [ages] movement."

Nor was this all. After his arrest, Abu Maizar told an FBI agent that he had decided to detonate the bomb on a subway line that runs from the northern tip of Manhattan to Coney Island at the very south of Brooklyn "because there are a lot of Jews that ride that train." At the trial itself, Abu Maizar informed the court that he wanted to harm this country "because I feel that the United States is supporting the Jewish state and the United States should be punished for supporting Israel." He spoke openly of his hopes to kill "as many [Jews] as I could take. . . . I always dreamed to be a martyr"; acknowledged supporting Hamas, the Palestinian extremist group; and in his error-filled letter demanded the release of several fundamentalists imprisoned in the United States. When the guilty verdict was read in court, he jumped to his feet, held an open copy of the Qur'an over his head, and shouted "*Allahu Akbar!*"—God is great, the battlecry of Muslim extremists.

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In other words, far from being a solitary crackpot, Abu Maizar represents a very large movement—fundamentalist Islam—in whose name Muslims like him are ready to commit the most heinous acts of violence, and even to give up their own lives, in an effort to "punish" America and, especially, to kill American Jews.

FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAM (or Islamism, as it is increasingly and more properly called) turns the traditional religion of Islam into a 20th-century-style radical ideology. Like earlier such visions—fascism, Marxism-Leninism—it seeks to build the just society by forcing human life to conform to a preconceived totalitarian plan. This Islamic-flavored totalitarianism holds that if only Muslims lived in strict accordance with the sacred law of their faith, the *shari'a*, they would regain the wealth and strength that was theirs at the height of Islam's glory in the Middle Ages.

Jews enter the picture, along with British and American "imperialists," as the perceived main obstacle to the fulfillment of this utopian vision. In the fundamentalist view, Jews everywhere have spared no effort in their drive to dominate the world and especially the Muslim nations. Every perceived enemy of Islam, from Atatürk to Madonna, from Israel to the U.S. military's Central Command, is the creation of global Jewry. If the threat posed by this supposed assault on Islam is ever to be eliminated, a no less ruthless war against the Jews is an urgent necessity, and the duty of every Muslim.

In its obsession with the Jews, fundamentalist Islam confirms its structural resemblance to the other major totalitarian ideologies of our century. (As Hannah Arendt long ago pointed out, anti-Semitism was intrinsic to both Nazism and Soviet Communism.) In one way, however, it goes beyond its precursors. Nazis and Communists never had the audacity to emigrate in large numbers from their home countries to the United States; much less did they hope to find a substantial base of support among Americans. Yet that is precisely what fundamentalist Islam, together with its odd fellow traveler, the Nation of Islam—a native-born amalgam of Islamic, black-nationalist, and other elements—has done. Unlike the Brown Shirts and Communists of the 1930's, Muslims who hate the United States, and especially the Jews therein, are growing both in numbers and reach within our borders, enjoying the protections afforded by the rule of law and the indulgence of a benevolent, pluralist society.

It is a fortunate fact that such Muslims do not represent all Muslims in the United States. Some, indeed, resist, whether actively or passively, the demonization of Jews. Many leading Muslim organizations, whatever the true state of their feelings, are careful in public to avoid the taint of anti-Semitism. To the contrary, their spokesmen regularly appear in "dialogue" with Jewish leaders, or participate in efforts like the Detroit Round Table, a branch of the National Conference of Christians and Jews devoted to bringing Jews and Muslims together. Going farther, others have established cooperative links with American Jews (and Christians) on issues of common concern. Thus, in Washington, D.C., a leading imam joined with Christian and Jewish leaders in 1980 to help defeat proposed legislation to legalize gambling, and Muslims have similarly worked with Jews on matters connected to welfare and children's education. A few brave souls—most notably W. Deen Mohammed, the leading figure among black converts to mainstream Islam—have in the past also stood up against Muslims who attack Jews.

Both the Jewish and the Islamic communities profit by such connections. Jews gain allies, Muslims gain stature. For the more traditionalist elements in both communities, moreover, there is the added attraction of forming a larger front against what is seen as the "chaos and evil" of contemporary American society, to use the words of Robert Crane, a prominent American convert to Islam who wants Muslims to "work with like-minded traditionalists of America's other religions" in order to "complete the American Revolution."

BUT, IN TRUTH, these positive attitudes are very much the exception. The rule, insofar as Jews are concerned, is otherwise. At huge conventions closed to the press and public, in speeches and publications that tend to be couched in the historic Muslim languages rather than in English, nearly every Muslim organization in the United States—emphatically including those that carefully maintain a proper demeanor for public, English-language consumption—spews forth a blatant and vicious anti-Semitism, a barrage of bias, calumny, and conspiracy-mongering of a sort that has otherwise all but disappeared from American discourse.

Since leading Islamic groups in the United States are in regular touch with Middle Eastern organizations like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, it may not be surprising that the rhetoric of the latter, infused with talk of killing Jews and celebrating acts of violence, should have found a home here as well. In an ironic echo of the hoariest themes of Christian anti-Semitism, medieval tales

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of Jews using Gentile blood in Passover rituals are now spread throughout the American Muslim community. These take their place alongside 19th-century myths of Jewish world domination and fantasies of revenge and physical extermination ("O Muslim, servant of God, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him"), often phrased in terms reminiscent of Nazi racial invective ("sons of monkeys and pigs and worshipers of evil"). Talk of a bloody and decisive battle with Jews is routine, both from openly extremist groups like the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) and from seemingly moderate ones, like the Council on American-Islamic Relations, that are scrupulous in issuing abstract, pro-forma condemnations of "terrorism" (but do not identify what Hamas does as terrorism). The IAP in particular has distributed communiqués by Hamas calling for the killing of Jews, and has produced training videos for Hamas and recruited members on its behalf.

In addition to reprinting articles and books and recycling the rhetoric of the fundamentalist Middle East, Islamic groups here also fly in fundamentalist spokesmen from abroad to address their mammoth conventions at downtown hotels in cities like Chicago and Oklahoma City. (The annual conference of the Islamic Society of North America, for example, attracts about 15,000 participants.) At one such gathering in Kansas City in 1989, Yusuf al-Qardawi, who is based in Qatar and is one of the most eminent Islamic theologians alive today, told his audience (in Arabic): "On the hour of judgment, Muslims will fight the Jews and kill them." In 1991, a leader of Islamic Jihad, Abd al-Aziz Uda, assured a meeting of the American Islamic Group (AIG) that Jews "understand only one language: the language of *jihad*, and the language of confrontation, and the language of sacrifice."

In one particularly hair-raising scene in December 1994, Bassam Alamoush, a prominent Jordanian fundamentalist, began his Arabic-language talk before the Muslim Arab Youth Association in Chicago with an anecdote: "Somebody approached me at the mosque [in Amman] and asked me, 'If I see a Jew in the street, should I kill him?'" From a videotape in his possession, Steven Emerson, the well-known authority on international terrorism, describes what happened next:

> After pausing a moment with a dumbfounded face, Alamoush answered the question to a laughing crowd: "Don't ask me. After you kill him, come and tell me. What do you want from me, a *fatwa* [legal ruling]? Really, a good deed does not require one." Later in the speech, Alamoush was interrupted by an aide with a note: "Good news—there has been a suicide operation in Jerusalem" killing three people. Thunderous applause followed his statement.

IT CANNOT be emphasized enough that the Islamic groups and organizations sponsoring such events and disseminating such material are not on the fringe but in the mainstream, where, by hiding their true identity, they manage to pass as moderates; the director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, for example, has attended White House functions. However wide the range of opinion may be in the Muslim community at large—like their co-religionists elsewhere, Muslims in the United States obviously espouse a variety of outlooks—the fact is that nearly every leading institution, as well as a large and perhaps increasing proportion of local mosques, weekly newspapers, and communal organizations, is in the control of the fundamentalists.

One of the few nonfundamentalist leaders in this country, Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, warned the State Department in early 1999 that extremists had "taken over 80 percent of the mosques" in the United States. (As if in confirmation of his point, Kabbani was vilified for his remarks with death threats.) What this means is that, in startling contrast to countries like Turkey and Egypt, where a lively debate is taking place between moderates and fundamentalists, here, in the land of the free, the moderate majority hardly has a voice.

What explains the near-hegemony enjoyed by fundamentalism? In part, it is a consequence of the support extended to it by Middle Eastern governments—Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya; these regimes, according to the (perhaps hyperbolic) estimate of Kabbani, have funneled "billions of dollars" into fundamentalist activism. Then, too, fundamentalists are highly focused and highly motivated, whereas moderates by definition tend to be less so, and also less involved in Islamic activities altogether.

Finally, the United States exercises a perversely magnetic appeal to fundamentalists. Often hounded from their own countries of origin, they have found refuge in a society that offers excellent communications and transportation, that is awash in money, and whose law-enforcement agencies still treat their activities with benign neglect. What better place than Los Angeles to spread the faith, Chicago to make a fortune for the cause, or Jersey City to plot mayhem?

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THIS BRINGS us to the separate but related phenomenon of the Nation of Islam—a complement to the organizations under the control of the Middle-Eastern-inspired fundamentalists. Here, a little demography is in order. Of the total Muslim population in this country—conventionally but very unscientifically estimated at six million—something like three-quarters are immigrants, mostly from South Asia and the Middle East, and their descendants. That leaves another 25 percent who are converts, of whom most are African Americans. Among these, the great majority adhere to a form of traditional Islam, while a very small number—perhaps 20,000—are members of the Nation of Islam.

Despite its relatively puny size, the Nation of Islam is of cardinal importance. Nearly all American black converts to Islam, wherever they may eventually end up on the religio-national spectrum, have at one time or another had a connection to this organization or to one of its many associated movements. Furthermore, the Nation of Islam has a substantial following among American blacks attracted to its teachings but not yet ready to take the huge step of converting from Christianity.

The Nation of Islam began its existence in isolation from the Middle East and that region's vehement brand of anti-Semitism. During the long reign of its founder Elijah Muhammad (1934-75), relations with Jews were mixed. Although he hated whites, Elijah Muhammad bore no particular grievance against Jews. "Jews and Muslims," he wrote once, "have always been able to settle their differences between each other better than Christians and Muslims. . . . The American Jew and the American Black Man may yet find some way of making a separate relationship out of the other world." Still, Elijah Muhammad was also capable of turning Jews into a potent symbol of his arch-enemy; Israel, he asserted in his *History of the Nation of Islam*, is "the whole of the white race."

After a short hiatus following Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, Louis Farrakhan revived the Nation of Islam under his leadership; by then, contacts had developed with the Middle East, whether through travel there on the part of Nation of Islam members or through a growing acquaintance with immigrants to the United States. Ever since then, anti-Semitism has become a central, even an obsessive, theme. By 1984, indeed, Farrakhan and his organization had become the most conspicuous propagators of anti-Semitism in the United States.

The Nation of Islam openly purveys the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the notorious turn-of-the-20th-century anti-Semitic forgery, and Farrakhan regularly expounds its motifs, holding Jews accountable for both capitalism and Communism, for the two world wars, for Hollywood, and for the U.S. debt. He accuses Jews of dominating American politics ("all Presidents since 1932 are controlled by the Jews") and the media ("any newspaper that refused to acquiesce to controlled news was brought to its knees by withdrawing advertising. Failing this, the Jews stop the supply of newsprint and ink"). To Farrakhan, Jews are "the most organized, rich and powerful people, not only in America but in the world." In fact, he has asserted, "85 percent of the masses of the people of earth are victimized" by Jews.

If these are old tropes, Farrakhan has also had the imagination to fashion new ones. His trademark invention is that Jews were primarily responsible for the transatlantic slave trade—which, he claims, killed 100 million Africans. His organization's "Historical Research Department" has even done some original pseudo-scholarship, publishing in 1991 a volume entitled *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* that purports to prove how Jews took the lead in capturing black Africans, transporting them to America, and continuing their enslavement in the South. These ideas have become so influential in American black circles, and in some universities, that serious scholars of the subject have been compelled to issue book-length refutations.

Turning to more recent times, Farrakhan also blames Jewish "bloodsuckers" for standing in the way of black advancement. The active and well-documented participation of Jews in the black civil-rights movement he dismisses as a self-interested plot: in helping to integrate blacks into American society, Jews, he charges, were really aiming to destroy the autonomous black economic institutions spawned by Jim Crow in order to take them over themselves. Worse, by encouraging blacks to work within the system, Jews prevented them from escaping the chains of white supremacy. As if all that were not enough, Jews have also injected the AIDS virus into black newborns and are "plotting against us even as we speak."

TO COUNTER this alleged conspiracy, Farrakhan and his lieutenants and acolytes, who repeat and embellish these themes endlessly, have issued aggressive threats. In a much-publicized speech, Farrakhan referred to Adolf Hitler as a "very great man." Years ago he warned American Jews, "If you harm Jesse Jackson, in the name of Allah, that will

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be the last one you harm." And he has used almost the same words with regard to himself: "If you rise up to kill me, . . . all of you will be killed outright."

So far, these threats have remained almost entirely verbal. Indeed, one might say that an effective division of labor exists in American Islam. While the Nation of Islam has become the country's leading font of anti-Jewish rhetoric, elements of mainstream Islam, while presenting a much more polite public face, have a near-monopoly on anti-Jewish violence. In combination, the two of them are enjoying a success that far outpaces that of any possible rivals on the American scene.

The extreme right-wing Liberty Lobby, unlike the Nation of Islam, cannot pack thousands into large arenas to attend the harangues of its leader, or assemble hundreds of thousands on the Mall in Washington. The militiamen of Oklahoma or Montana cannot organize full-time paramilitary forces in dozens of locations, much less win federal government grants to subsidize those forces. (For-profit offshoots of the Fruit of Islam, the Nation of Islam's strong-arm unit, have won contracts in several states to patrol high-crime areas.) Posse Comitatus cannot find the resources to put together a "Historical Research Department" that will produce a conspiratorial account of, say, the American tax code. The Aryan Nation cannot locate a foreign patron like Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, who has offered $1 billion to the Nation of Islam.

Actual violence against Jews fits a similar pattern. Homegrown fanatics of the far Right may claim the June 1984 murder of Alan Berg, a Jewish talk-show host in Denver. By contrast, assaults by mainstream Muslims, mostly connected to the immigrant community, have included a long list of major incidents (as well as many lesser ones like a series of attacks on Chicago-area synagogues). A few highlights:

- March 1977: Hanafi Muslims (a group of black converts) seized three buildings in Washington, D.C., including the headquarters of B'nai B'rith, and held hostages for 39 hours, leading to one death and one severe injury.

- November 1990: Egyptian-born El Sayyid Nosair assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane in a New York hotel.

- February 1993: in the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, which claimed seven lives and injured more than a thousand people, Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the operation, declared the towers not a civilian target but a military one, by virtue of the fact that it might house a "Zionist official."

- June 1993: on a planned "day of terror," the United Nations complex, the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, and other New York landmarks were to be bombed simultaneously. "Boom! Broken windows. Jews in the street," is how one of the plotters described the carnage that would ensue.

- March 1994: Rashid Baz, a Lebanese immigrant, opened fire on a van carrying Orthodox Jewish boys across the Brooklyn Bridge, killing sixteen-year-old Ari Halberstam.

- July 1997: Ali Hasan Abu Kamal, a sixty-nine-year-old Palestinian, shot seven tourists atop the Empire State building, killing one and severely wounding another; in his suicide note, he accused the United States of using Israel as "an instrument" against the Palestinians.

It is in this list that Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar's July 1997 near-explosion of a pipe bomb in the New York City subway system assumes its rightful place.

AMERICAN JEWS are not the only objects of Islamist violence in the West: the same pattern can be seen in Europe and elsewhere. Thus, in 1995-96, according to *Anti-Semitism Worldwide*, an annual survey published by the Anti-Defamation League, while rightists in Europe continued to harass Jews and to vandalize Jewish property, "violent attacks with the intent of causing bodily harm were perpetrated in most cases by Muslim extremists." The only anti-Semitic terrorist act in Europe during 1995—the attempted bombing of a Jewish school near Lyons, France—was carried out not by skinheads but by an Algerian fundamentalist group. The same can be said of the bombings of the Israeli embassy and a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1992, in which 29 people lost their lives, and of similar goings-on in South Africa.

The point is this: in today's world, with exceptions (especially in Russia) duly noted, anti-Semitism traceable to Christians is almost everywhere relegated to the fringes and is on the decline; it has been cast out of the teachings of the established churches and denounced by political leaders. But if trends in Christian society are going in one direction, in Muslim societies around the globe they are going in the opposite direction. There, far from

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being a fringe phenomenon, ideological and political anti-Semitism is common currency—among heads of state, governing parties, powerful opposition groups, mainstream newspapers, and leading intellectuals alike.

In other words, what was historically a Christian phenomenon is now primarily a Muslim phenomenon. If Christian anti-Semitism is increasingly yesterday's problem, Muslim anti-Semitism is today's problem, and tomorrow's.

But that takes us back to where we began, in the nonresponse to Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar's attempt at mass murder. For in the United States one would hardly know anything about the depth and reach of Muslim anti-Semitism from following the press, from reading the work of most researchers, or even from tracking the statements of the organized Jewish community. In *Looking for Farrakhan* (1997), a book-length effort to understand the Nation of Islam leader, Florence Hamlish Levinsohn explains his anti-Semitism exclusively in terms of his Christian background, saying not a word about its Islamic component. The Anti-Defamation League, even while valiantly leading the fight against Farrakhan's anti-Jewish racism, sedulously avoids mentioning its religious context. Worst of all, many American Jewish organizations continue to devote considerable resources and energy to targeting the "Christian Right," while virtually ignoring the rise of Islamist fascism.

But whatever one thinks of the causes favored by the Christian Right—educational vouchers, school prayer, the display of religious symbols in public places, even the rollback of *Roe* v. *Wade*—they hardly constitute the most serious threat to the security of Jews in the United States today. The real and present danger is by no means the pro-Israel Christian Coalition but the rabidly anti-Semitic Muslim Arab Youth Association; not Jerry Falwell but Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman; not those who wish, at the very worst, to convert Jews but those who, with every means at their disposal, intend to do them harm, who have already acted on those violent intentions, and who if unchecked will surely do so again.

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The Forger and the Spy

Igor Golomstock

Forgers disrupt our sense of reality more queasily than any Surrealist. . . . [T]o have this world exposed as a forgery is like entering Salvador Dali's landscape of soft watches, where history melts.
—from a British newspaper

In 1963, while working as a senior researcher at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, I received an urgent request from the publishing house *Iskusstvo* ("Art") to review the manuscript of a book on Pablo Picasso's famous painting *Guernica* by the British art historian Sir Anthony Blunt. I was told that the request came directly from the Central Committee of the Communist party, which was demanding its immediate publication.

The request rather puzzled me: why should the Central Committee be so eager to publish a work about an artist, Picasso, who, despite his leftist political sympathies, had been condemned by the Soviet leadership as the premier "bourgeois formalist"? After all, not long before, my own small book on Picasso, which I had co-authored with Andrey Sinyavsky (soon to become a famous dissident), had barely made it through the censors. Although commissioned to mark the award to Picasso of the Soviet International Peace Prize, our work was blocked several times and was finally cleared only after considerable pressure from the French Communist party. After publication, it was severely criticized in the Soviet press as "a book that undermines the foundations of socialism."

At the time, I knew Anthony Blunt to be not only a prominent art historian but the director of the prestigious Courtauld Institute and curator of the Queen's art collection. I had also read his books on the 17th-century French classicist Nicolas Poussin and on the early Picasso. What I did not know was that he was also the mysterious "fourth man" of the notorious Cambridge spy ring whose other members—Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, and Kim Philby—had been exposed by British intelligence (and fled to safe haven in Moscow). All three of the latter—like Blunt himself, they were either homosexual or bisexual—had been recruited by the KGB in the 1930's, had become loyal servants of the Stalinist regime, and during World War II and later, from their high-ranking positions in British intelligence and at the British Foreign Office, had passed top secrets to their Soviet patrons. The activities of the Cambridge group are now regarded as the biggest case of political treason in the history of England.

Only the KGB knew back then that the fourth member of the group was Anthony Blunt, but 1963 was the year when he, too, would be unmasked.

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During his interrogation, he would admit his connections with the KGB but insist that after 1945 he had no longer passed sensitive information to the Russians: "In 1951, I was in touch with [Guy] Burgess once. Pressure was put on me then to move to Russia but I refused. Since then I have had no contacts with Russia."

Of course, on this as on other occasions, Blunt was lying. It is apparent to me now that in 1963 the KGB was planning to "relocate" him to the USSR and, by means of the book on *Guernica*, was preparing to introduce him to the Russian intelligentsia as a progressive art historian and a supporter of the Soviet cause who had gotten into trouble in his own country because of his political ideals. This never happened. In return for his confession, Blunt received a guarantee of immunity and assurances that his secret would not be revealed in public. He retained his curatorship of the Queen's collection and the directorship of the Courtauld, both of which he obviously considered preferable to a miserable existence in a drab Moscow suburb under the watchful eye of the KGB.

I was unaware of all this at the time: the KGB preferred not to let its skeletons tumble out of the closet. But I now understand why, although I did write a positive review of Blunt's manuscript, the book was never published in Russia. In any case, all that is prelude. Recently the name of Sir Anthony Blunt has come to life for me again, and from a most unexpected source.

ON THE morning of January 8, 1996, a man was discovered in a public park in Rome, suffering from serious injuries and with a broken skull. On being brought to a hospital, he was identified as Eric Hebborn, an English painter who owned a private art gallery in Rome. The doctors who tried to save Hebborn had no idea that, some years previously, this man had sparked an international uproar in the art world when he was unmasked as a forger of Old Master paintings. Hundreds of his works had been acquired by major collections around the world, including the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

A few days later, Hebborn died in his Rome hospital. Two of his books have been published: *Drawn to Trouble: Confessions of a Master Forger* (1991) and *The Art Forger's Handbook* (1997, released posthumously). From these "confessions" we learn that among the experts who issued certificates of authentication to Hebborn's forgeries was none other than Sir Anthony Blunt, who turns out to have been his old friend and lover.

So now we have two men—one an English aristocrat, the other a commoner who emerged from the bottom of British society—each of whom has gained a place of honor in the ranks of an ancient profession. Let us take them separately and together.

Eric Hebborn was born in 1934 in London. His father was a grocer's assistant, his mother stayed at home raising their many children. At the age of eight, aggrieved by something one of his teachers had said or done, Eric set fire to his school. Sent to an institution for youthful offenders, he developed a taste for homosexuality. Subsequently he passed many years in foster care and became attracted to petty crime, forging teachers' signatures on school reports and coloring snapshots for a local photographer. At school, however, he showed a remarkable talent for art, and eventually he even graduated from the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Though he had the potential to become a successful painter, Hebborn's life changed when, temporarily out of work, he was hired by a Mr. Aczel, an art dealer and owner of a restoration workshop. In *Drawn to Trouble*, Hebborn describes the beginning of what would become his real career:

> One day a picture dealer came into the studio carrying a canvas and a large brown paper envelope. He was an impressive middle-aged man of aristocratic bearing. . . .
>
> The canvas under his arm was not, however, a portrait, a landscape, a still-life, or for that matter anything else—it was completely blank. Nor did the blank canvas belong to England or even the 18th century. It had an original Dutch 17th-century stretcher, a Dutch 17th-century canvas, and a Dutch 17th-century ground [undercoating]. All it lacked was a 17th-century picture to make it worth a small fortune.
>
> It would seem that I was alone in noticing the lack of a picture because the picture dealer said: "Aczel, old boy, I've made an exciting discovery, what do you think of this Vandevelde?"
>
> "Very interesting," said Mr. Aczel, turning the empty canvas this way and that to get a raking light on it: "Very interesting indeed. Looks like a job for Mr. Hebborn here. What do you say, Eric?"
>
> "Uhm, very, uhm, interesting," said I, following my employer's example. "What did you say it was, Vanden what?"
>
> "It, Eric, is a Vandevelde, and a very fine one I should say, wouldn't you?" He addressed the dealer: "Not too fine, not too fine. Something for a small collector, I imagine. After all it needs fairly extensive restoration and the museum people might be finicky. Then there's the prob-

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lem of attribution. On the other hand, if a signature should appear during the cleaning. . . ."

"More than likely it will," said my employer.

It did not take Eric Hebborn long to "uncover" the signature and eventually to cook up a whole new Vandevelde. By chance, around this same time Hebborn was awarded a Royal Academy prize for his paintings. Whether he might still have pursued a future as a legitimate artist we will never know, for he now set out for Rome, where for the first time he came across Anthony Blunt.

"We became friends," writes Hebborn in his memoirs,

> and our friendship was to span two decades, but although we were both homosexual and Anthony was certainly attracted to me physically, what fascinated me about him was his mind. My working-class background and the poor education attendant on it had not been conducive to cultivating my own intellectual powers, and I felt very conscious of my shortcomings. Now I had the advantage of following the workings of a really fine intellect at close quarters, and I was determined to benefit from the experience as much as I possibly could. We spent the greater part of our time together drinking and discussing Old Master drawings, and I learned a great deal, not only about the drawings themselves, but what goes on in the minds of the experts who view them.

Upon his return to London, Hebborn decided to broaden his base. At an antiquarian shop he acquired a quantity of blank pages torn out of old books dating from various periods, and set to work. A quantity of "Whistlers" and "Augustus Johns's" were thus born, and soon came to be in demand among amateur collectors. As he worked, Hebborn closely studied old techniques, making some important discoveries in the process.

One day, for example, Hebborn bought at auction a print allegedly made from a drawing by Jan Breughel that he quickly recognized to be a copy. Now, an experienced copyist may be capable of reproducing with utmost precision every line of an original, but as a rule he will be unable to imitate the speed and rhythm of the master's hand. Hebborn was determined to overcome this limitation. Placing the copy in front of him, he attempted to recreate the lost original. In his book he lays bare the stages of this process:

> To make the first marks of the new Old Master, knowing that one tiny slip could cost you a small fortune in wasted materials, is a nerve-wracking experience, and it was not until I had sipped a lot of brandy and drawn a few lines in Breughel's manner on a scrap of notepaper that the stage fright vanished and the connection between the conscious and the subconscious was unblocked. Oblivious of my actual surroundings, I found myself sitting on a stone in front of the ruins of the so-called Temple of Venus and Diana at Baia on a bright clear morning over 300 years ago. Time was halted. Hours must have passed but it was as if I had breathed the drawing into existence in a moment. The differences between my "Breughel" and the engraver's copy from which I had worked were subtle in the extreme. The strokes of the pen were identical save for the ineffable quality of touch. Whereas the old version was impersonal as though it were the product of a copying machine, my own had, I hoped (and I am not ashamed of using the word), the authentic touch of a draughtsman's hand.

The forged Breughel was sold by Hebborn to one of the most respectable London galleries, which in turn sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. More forgeries—of Pantormo, Castiglione, Mantegna, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Bouche, Poussin—followed in due course.

To avoid becoming the proverbial mote in the eyes of London art dealers and gallery owners, and to escape the draconian British laws against homosexuals, Hebborn eventually moved back to Rome and opened his own gallery. His forgeries now acquired an infinitely more credible provenance: no longer a petty middleman, he came across as a prominent art dealer with the knack of uncovering masterpieces hidden in private collections. Meanwhile, his skill was being perfected and he entered upon a period that in his memoir he dubs "*la dolce vita*."

AS FOR Sir Anthony, when Hebborn first met him in Rome in 1960 he was in his early fifties and at the peak of his glory. He had come into this world in 1907, the son of a modest parish priest in a small provincial English town. The family, however, prided itself on its close ties with nobility: Anthony's mother was a third cousin to the future Queen Elizabeth II. Educated at Marlborough College and then at Cambridge, Blunt became a professional art historian and in the course of his career, as I have mentioned, rose to occupy several prestigious positions. As for his *other* profession, British intelligence apparently still knew nothing about it, and would not know for another three years.

Blunt had been recruited in the 1920's or possibly early 1930's while a student at Cambridge and a member of the Society of Apostles—an elitist club

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inside an elitist university. The main principle of the society, as Bertrand Russell, one of its former members, later testified, was absolute freedom in discussion and an equal freedom in political and moral attitudes. Politically, most of the Apostles in Blunt's time were Marxists. As to their morals, they readily assimilated the idea, vouched for in the ancient classics, that sexual love between men is of a higher order than love of woman.

It is not surprising that this political/sexual cocktail should have made Cambridge, and the Apostles in particular, a main target of Soviet secret intelligence. Young Marxist sympathizers were an easy prey for political seduction while their homosexual orientation—which until 1964 carried a criminal conviction in England if discovered—provided a convenient weapon of blackmail. Of the four members of the Society of Apostles who became Soviet spies, at least two, it is now known, were recruited by Blunt.

Their close ties and their common Cambridge background also opened the quartet's way to the highest reaches of British government and power. In 1940, Blunt began working at MI-5, the department of counterintelligence, where he became party to important state secrets. He had access, for example, to information about the landing of Allied forces in Normandy in the summer of 1944. During his time at MI-5 he also took part in operation "Double Cross," which involved dealing with both German and Soviet agents, and he organized a system of informants inside the London-based embassies of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, and Estonia—the East European countries opposed to Stalin's regime. Endowed with a photographic memory, he had no need to copy documents or take notes, but simply passed the information from memory to his KGB controller, the first secretary of the Soviet embassy in London, Anatoly Gorsky (who later defected and settled in Washington). The list of victims who suffered at the hands of Stalin's bloody regime as a result of Blunt's activities will never be known.

EXACTLY LIKE Hebborn, then, Anthony Blunt was a deceiver, and to the manner born. From his youth, he had led a double, perhaps even a triple, life. In *The Mask of Treachery*, a book about the Cambridge Four, John Castello writes that Blunt's sexual preferences led him to choose his lovers from the lower social classes. Though knighted by the queen, he allegedly continued to hang around pubs and in public toilets frequented by the Buckingham Palace guards. He was said to derive pleasure from escorting the French president on a morning tour of the British royal art collections while knowing that at six in the evening he had an appointment with his KGB controller, after which he would be free to rendezvous with his guardsmen.

Whether he also participated in his friend Hebborn's deceptions is less easy to say. On his frequent visits to London, Hebborn stayed in Blunt's flat in Portman Square, on the top floor of the Courtauld Institute. Hebborn insists that he never asked Blunt to authenticate the forgeries he brought back from Italy, and indeed that Blunt did not even know they were forgeries. Nevertheless, several passages in his memoirs point to the important role Blunt played in certifying Hebborn's fakes as genuine. "On 26th March 1968," writes Hebborn,

> there was an auction at Christie's announcing a sale of drawings by Old Masters. Numbers 139 and 140 were Pantormo and Castiglione—both my forgeries. . . . Among the experts was Anthony Blunt. . . . Now that Anthony is dead I can see no reason for hiding the truth. Anthony was definitely responsible for the Castiglione attribution. I know this because he had admired it on the wall in Piazza Paganica [the villa in Rome where Hebborn lived] saying it was his favorite kind of Castiglione, even going so far as to offer to buy it.

Elsewhere Hebborn describes taking a group of his counterfeit 17th-century drawings to London:

> While staying with Anthony in Portman Square, [I] had left them on the side table in my room where he chanced upon them. "Do you think they're right?" I asked. "It seems to me that one of them is on 18th-century paper." This was in fact true but Anthony examined them and found nothing wrong with them. I mentioned an appointment for the following day to show them to [the art gallery] Colnaghi's. Unknown to me at the time, Anthony then phoned Colnaghi's and advised them to buy.

If, as Hebborn claims, Blunt did not know about his secret activities, how is it possible that a celebrated art historian could have erred so badly in his attributions? Was his expert judgment clouded by the desire to help his friend and lover? Perhaps; but quite possibly other factors played a part as well.

As a young man, Blunt had dreamed of becoming a painter, but his attempts in this direction showed a complete lack of talent. Those who knew him in those years used to say that Blunt's subsequent professional devotion to art was a compensation for his own creative impotence. By his students' accounts he was a brilliant lecturer, erudite and knowledgeable in a wide range of fields. About

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Poussin, certainly, the subject of his doctoral thesis and of a subsequent two-volume scholarly study, he seemed to know all there was to know.

Nevertheless, recent reappraisals of his work have revealed a number of serious professional deficiencies. Blunt failed in his attempts to establish a chronology of Poussin's works, and he incorrectly ascribed to Poussin's brush a number of clearly inferior paintings. Apparently, he was also unable to distinguish a Poussin original from a Hebborn copy.

Surely more was going on here than mere incompetence. Blunt viewed art through the prism of his own hyper-rational ideas and theories: these are what shaped his affection for 17th-century French classicism in the first place. It was often said that, in his magnum opus on Poussin, Blunt had created a portrait of the artist in his own image—and that image, it is crucial to add, included his own essential doubleness. Thus, Poussin's well-documented religious convictions and ties with Jesuits were transformed, in Blunt's "enlightened" interpretation, into a disguise, camouflage for the artist's supposedly true identity. In reality, Blunt contended, Poussin was a rationalist and a materialist, almost a secret agent of the secular Enlightenment to come.

The critic Marco Famarolli has put the essential point baldly:

> There is no doubt that Blunt was tempted to attribute the double life of the spy to Poussin, his favorite subject throughout his life, suggesting that he apparently was perfectly adapted to his surroundings, while in his heart betraying it for a cause known only to himself and a handful of confederates.

Another observer has noted that in Blunt's book, Poussin and his confidants talk to each other using the jargon of the Cambridge Marxists of the 1930's.

In other words, Blunt falsified the image of Poussin as skillfully as he falsified the image of himself, and as skillfully as Eric Hebborn, in his turn, would falsify the Poussin drawings that no lesser an expert than Sir Anthony Blunt would authenticate as originals.

Which brings us to the dénouement. From his book, it is clear that Hebborn eventually became the victim of his own success: he simply lost caution. In 1984, a year after Sir Anthony died in his own bed, a millionaire (though stripped of his knighthood in 1979 in the wake of public revelation of his treason), Hebborn's secret activities came to light. He had forged drawings by two different artists on the same type of paper. Curators at the National Gallery in Washington and the Morgan Library in New York began to examine carefully the works that had entered their collections directly or indirectly from Hebborn. In the end, he was forced to own up.

After he was uncovered, Hebborn tried to claim authorship of many masterpieces with which he had had nothing to do, among them the famous Leonardo cartoon of the Holy Family in London's National Gallery. He also gave interviews to the press and appeared on radio and television where he justified his criminal doings by speaking of his desire to expose the deviousness of art critics and the incompetence of experts who refused to recognize his talent.

The worth of a work of art, Hebborn now insisted, is determined not by the author's signature but by the quality of its execution. For this reason, a forger whose paintings are equal to those created by Old Masters is not the real criminal:

> I feel that the real criminals are those who give wrong information about works of art. They fall into two categories—the expert and the dealer. . . . The more competent the expert, the more pleasure I derive from being able to lead him astray.

One cannot help wondering whether, in boasting of his ability to deceive the art experts, Hebborn specifically had in mind his old, trusted friend, the art expert and expert deceiver Anthony Blunt.

Forgery, in art as in politics, is an ancient technique. But the 20th century has made a unique contribution to it, borrowing freely from the blurred criteria—between truth and falsehood, between reality and self-serving myth—that in our historical moment have infected standards of personal and political behavior no less than they have infected standards of critical judgment. In this sense, though destiny sculpted these two men from different materials, it seems they were made by the same hand; any "double portrait" of them is both a positive and a negative of the same image.

It is also a mirror of the age. A traitor and spy who not only passed to the KGB the secrets of his own country but thereby consigned human lives to dust ends his days peacefully, still a member of the Royal Academy and of King's College, Cambridge. A notorious art forger, even though unmasked, freely uses the media to publicize his ideas while continuing to live in Italy and to fulfill orders from shady dealers until his murder by an unknown hand in a Roman park. That we do not find these things surprising tells us more than we need to know about the intellectual and spiritual malaise that lurks at the heart of our culture and our times.

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Why We Were in Central America

Mark Falcoff

SPEAKING IN the capital of Guatemala on March 10, President Bill Clinton formally apologized for the role the United States had played in that country and, by extension, for our past policies throughout Central America. His exact words were these:

> For the United States, it is important that I state clearly that support for military forces and intelligence units which engaged in violence and widespread repression was wrong, and that the United States must not repeat that mistake.

The President's dramatic apology, offered during a tour of four Central American republics, was not the only event this past March that, almost a decade after the guns fell silent in Central America's civil/international wars, reopened the issue of American involvement in that part of the world. Another was the publication of the report of the Historical Clarification Commission in Guatemala, which investigated repression of native communities (and others) during the country's long internal war. And still another was the release by the Washington-based National Security Archive of recently declassified documents that also related to U.S. involvement in Guatemala.

The report of the Clarification Commission alone, covering a period from roughly 1954, when a CIA-sponsored coup ousted the government of Jacobo Arbenz, to 1991, when the Guatamalan government signed a peace accord with the guerrilla forces seeking to overthrow it, was enough to curl one's hair, and was duly hailed in the American and European press as proof positive of Washington's long-term perfidy. The commission, according to the (London) *Guardian*, concluded that "the U.S. was responsible for most of the human-rights abuses committed during the 36-year war in which 200,000 people died." And the *Guardian* report continued, in a graphic vein:

> A 1966 document reveals that U. S. security forces set up a safe house inside the presidential palace in Guatemala City for use by Guatemalan security agents and their U.S. contacts. It became the headquarters for the so-called "dirty war." Another document reveals security forces arrested 32 people suspected of aiding the guerrillas. A CIA cable a year later identified some of the missing as people on a list of "Guatemalan Communists and terrorists" who were "executed secretly by Guatemalan authorities." In October 1967, a secret State Department cable said covert Guatemalan security operations included "kidnapping, torture, and summary executions.". . . The same memo talks

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of a special commando unit, which carried out "abductions, bombings, street assassinations, and executions of real or alleged Communists." More than 25 years later, a CIA cable confirmed that civilian villages were targeted because of the [American-backed] army's belief that their Mayan Indian inhabitants were aiding the guerrillas. "Several villages have been burned to the ground," the cable tells Washington. [The commission] confirmed that entire communities were massacred. It said children were killed, abducted, forcibly recruited as soldiers, illegally adopted, and sexually abused. Fetuses were cut from their mothers' wombs and young children were smashed against walls or thrown alive into pits. As late as April 1998 Bishop Juan Gerardi, who coordinated the Catholic Church's report on atrocities, was brutally murdered.

For its part, the *New York Times* was not satisfied to restrict the record of U.S.-sponsored atrocities to Guatemala alone. Commenting on President Clinton's tour in an editorial, the paper recalled an earlier visit by President Ronald Reagan to the region in 1982—the "peak period," as the *Times* instructed its readers, in Guatemala's military genocide of its Indian communities. Just as bad, the paper continued, that period was marked by President Reagan's incessant "praise of military leaders" in both Guatemala and El Salvador, and by misguided policies that led us to "spen[d] billions in lethal aid to their governments and the Nicaraguan *contras*."

The tone of this and similar commentary throughout the world press may help to explain why President Clinton felt obliged to address the matter as he did in the course of his tour. His words of apology cannot be lightly dismissed—even if they issue from a man who, as every American has had occasion to learn, habitually experiences no great difficulty apologizing for acts for which he feels no contrition. In a single sentence, the President of the United States finally said what our homegrown "peace constituency" and its epigones in the media had been dying to hear for decades: that in Central America, if not indeed elsewhere in the world during the cold war, the United States was on the "wrong side" of history.

IT WILL be a long time before this latest exercise in historical revisionism is ever effectively countered by a firm appreciation of the facts, if for no other reason than that most Americans—including, it would seem, President Clinton himself—know precious little about Central America and are not interested in learning more. Nor do they or he seem to have much of a grasp of the history, even the quite recent history, of U.S. policy in each of the six greatly different republics that occupy the isthmus. But let us, in what follows, do what we can.

First, Guatemala. Even without the benefit of the Historical Clarification Commission and the documents recently declassified by the National Security Archive, no serious observer can gloss over the essentially tragic nature of that country's recent and not so recent past. Central America's most populous republic, it was in colonial times the seat of the Spanish Captains-General; but for most of the time since its independence in 1821 it has been basically a feudal society, one whose large Indian majority (divided, however, into 60 language groups) has been exploited by cruel, ruthless "white" landowners eagerly assisted by *ladino* (mixed-race) politicians and military officers.

For most of this century, Guatemala was ruled by dictators, whether civilian or military. One of them, Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), the inspiration for *El Señor Presidente* (1946), a novel by the Nobel laureate Miguel Angel Asturias, was among the first Latin American authoritarians to create his own secret police. He also plundered the treasury, greatly expanded the standing army, and systematically jailed or exiled his opponents. His successor, Jorge Ubico (1931-44), was by some accounts even worse, though he ended debt peonage for the Indians and clamped down on corruption.

My excuse for dipping into this ancient history is that much of the commentary about Guatemala in today's press suggests, at least by indirection, that the country was a bucolic paradise before (to use the words of an Associated Press report) it was "split" apart by the "American-backed coup [that] put rightists in power in 1954." The truth is quite to the contrary: Guatemalan society was "split" before, during, and after the regime of the ousted Jacobo Arbenz, who managed to add a few wrinkles of his own to his country's characteristic pathologies.

More history, not quite so ancient: Arbenz was a young military officer who had participated in Guatemala's revolution of 1944, an event that not only sent the dictator Ubico into exile but brought to power an entirely new generation of civilian and military leaders. The emblematic figure of that revolution was President Juan José Arévalo (1944-50), a somewhat otherworldly intellectual who considered himself a "spiritual socialist." While not partic-

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ularly radical, Arévalo was both weak and inept as an administrator, and was inclined to turn a blind eye both to corruption and to Communist infiltration of Guatemala's labor unions and educational system. Constitutional guarantees were suspended for roughly half the time he was in power.

One of those most disturbed by Arévalo's performance in office was Colonel Javier Arana, a hero of the revolution of 1944 who was assassinated under mysterious circumstances before the 1950 presidential elections. Though no conclusive evidence has ever linked him to this murder, Jacobo Arbenz was certainly its principal beneficiary, replacing Arana as defense minister and inheriting the latter's mantle of political succession. Arbenz's own victory in 1950 was assured by a combination of positive and negative sanctions: government funds were used to bus Indians to polling places, and two prominent opposition candidates were conveniently exiled.

The Arbenz regime was notable for the emergence of the Guatemalan Communist party as its principal prop. In return for the party's electoral support, the country's labor federation quickly came under Communist domination, and a confiscatory land-reform law was drafted that affected, among others, the United Fruit Company, the biggest landlord in Guatemala.* (When the law was declared unconstitutional by the supreme court, Arbenz ordered the removal of its offending members.) As for the opposition, it was kept at bay by the Civil Guard, which—while by no means as brutal as its successors—freely engaged in torture, murder, and intimidation.

By March 1954 Arbenz had unambiguously reaffirmed his support for the Guatemalan Communists, referring to them as the "democratic and progressive forces of the revolution." Meanwhile, he ordered 2,000 tons of weapons from Eastern Europe to arm a workers' and peasants' brigade. It was surely this action—a threat to any standing army—that precipitated his regime's terminal crisis. While the CIA had organized a small insurrectionary force in neighboring Honduras, and engaged in some very sophisticated political warfare, Arbenz was overthrown not by this small column of men but by his own armed forces at home.

WITH THE advantage of hindsight, one can say that the United States might well have held back from involvement in Guatemala's domestic political turmoil. For one thing, Arbenz's primitive and dogmatic economic notions, combined with his disposition to ignore or repress his opposition—plus the vast liability represented by his close alliance with the Communists—might well have led in any case to his overthrow. For another, while the United States did not invent Guatemala's problems, by intervening in such a dramatic and obvious way, it acquired a kind of indirect responsibility for everything that happened thereafter. For still another, as the late CIA planner Richard Bissell wrote in his memoirs, *Reflections of a Cold Warrior* (1996), the celerity with which Arbenz was dislodged encouraged the entire national-security establishment in Washington to overestimate the potential of covert warfare. "For many policy-makers outside the CIA," Bissell recalls, "it "became a quick fix, an easy way to deal with hostile foreign leaders and renegade nation-states." A short and direct line runs from the overthrow of Arbenz to the Bay of Pigs disaster in 1961.

Still and all, it is not impossible that, left to its own devices, Guatemala might have become the first client-state of the Soviet Union in Latin America. To judge by Arbenz's trajectory after 1954 as a serial guest of Soviet-style police states in Prague and Havana, he might even have preceded Fidel Castro in convincing the Kremlin to abandon its old habit of assigning Latin America to the U.S. sphere of influence. We will never know. But these were the concerns of the U.S. government and the Central Intelligence Agency at the time, and subsequent events in Cuba only five years later suggest that they were by no means frivolous or irresponsible.

Where Washington *can* be criticized most harshly is on the score of inattention; having seen the overthrow of Arbenz, it lost all interest in the quality of Guatemala's government under his successors. Even so, in considering Guatemala after Arbenz it is necessary to parse a very long stretch of time—from 1954 to 1991. First there were the purges under the regime of Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas (1954-60). Next came the development of an armed guerrilla movement with Cuban and Soviet assistance (1960-77). This was followed, thirdly, by a period of U.S. sanctions and an embargo on arms and training (1977-86). Fourth and finally, Guatemala came to be governed by a sequence of elected governments (1986-91).

From the point of view of assessing U.S. com-

* The United Fruit connection has produced a lush undergrowth of mythology, the purpose of which is to establish that U.S. hostility to Arbenz was fueled exclusively by corporate interests. (The most recent installment in the myth-making process was the episode "Our Own Backyard" in the CNN series, *Cold War*.) In fact, as the case of Cuba was to show several years later, Washington was far more frightened by the prospect of Communism than by punitive expropriations, which were after all nothing new.

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plicity, the first and second periods were the worst. But of the two, the first, comprising the immediate post-Arbenz years from 1954 to 1960, seem almost benevolent compared with what came later, characterized more by garden-variety political persecution (leftist politicians and labor leaders forced to flee, leftist intellectuals dismissed from educational posts or other government jobs) than by mass murder. In those years, political conflict was largely centered in Guatemala's cities, and did not involve the tactical military in a major way.

THINGS REALLY changed after the Cuban revolution in 1959-60, when Fidel Castro began to export a new form of revolution based on guerrilla warfare in the countryside. As in a number of other countries threatened by Cuban-sponsored insurgencies, the United States now became deeply involved in training the Guatemalan army in counterinsurgency, a skill for which—to say the very least—the latter showed none of the requisite professional skill, patience, or political imagination.

Why did the U.S. not disengage itself at this point? The answer has partly to do with bureaucratic inertia, partly with the incurably optimistic American conviction that foreign armies can be reshaped into our own image and likeness. But the fundamental reason was that the cold war in Latin America was then at its height, with Cuban and Soviet-sponsored guerrilla movements operating by now in a dozen countries. Guatemala, as it happens, was one of the two key targets selected by Castro for subversion—the other was Venezuela—and could not easily be abandoned without important geopolitical consequences.

And the guerrilla challenge in Guatemala was by no means negligible. For much of the 60's, large parts of the countryside were controlled by the Armed Revolutionary Forces (FAR), which on occasion showed themselves capable of reaching deep into the capital; in 1968, they managed to assassinate the U.S. ambassador.

By the mid-1970's, this threat had receded to the point where Washington could afford the luxury of casting a skeptical eye on some of its more unsavory allies. Important figures in the Ford administration—most notably, Assistant Secretary of State William D. Rogers, as well as our diplomatic representatives in Guatemala City and at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—deliberately distanced themselves from the regime. But the decisive change came with the Carter administration. In 1977, the United States for the first time conditioned its military aid to Guatemala on an improved human-rights performance—a policy that (under somewhat different circumstances) was extended well into the second Reagan administration in the mid-1980's. In other words, from 1977 to 1986, in the third of the four periods under discussion, the United States provided Guatemala with *no* military assistance, *no* foreign military sales, and exactly $300,000 in training—and then only in 1985, after the armed forces had agreed to return to their barracks.

The chronology here is crucial. First, it gives the lie to the claim of the *New York Times* that the Reagan administration transferred "billions in lethal aid" to the Guatemalan government. Second, as the report of the Historical Clarification Commission also establishes, it was precisely when U.S. influence in Guatemala was at its *nadir* that the vast majority of human-rights violations —the "peak period," to revert to the *Times*'s misleading language—occurred in that country. (The article in the *Guardian* similarly obscures this point by collapsing events that occurred during that period with earlier moments.)

What was really going on? Throughout the long U.S. embargo—an embargo extending well beyond military aid to a proscription on ordinary development assistance—the Guatemalan government, then as usual run by the army, pointedly thumbed its nose at Washington and went its own way. It was able to do so in part because other countries, notably Spain, France, and Italy—even under socialist governments!—eagerly stepped forward to offer the training being denied by the United States.

The ironies here are multiple. By teaching the Guatemalan military just how easy and painless it was to flout Washington, the American embargo strengthened the hand of the most vicious and intransigent officers and their allies in the business community, and removed whatever restraints might have been inhibiting them from fighting the civil war on their own terms and in their own way. To put matters baldly, these people *preferred* to be liberated from U.S. interference, and during the 1980's often bragged that, unlike their counterparts in El Salvador, they had not "sold out" to the Yankees. (One of Washington's major concerns during this period was, in fact, that the example of Guatemala's "independence" would prove too attractive to the farthest Right in El Salvador and its potential allies in the armed forces.)

To be sure, even when the U.S. was not actively engaged in Guatemala, it continued to maintain an intelligence presence there, as it did in scores of

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other countries. This explains why so many U.S. government documents utilized by the Historical Clarification Commission could be so exact in their recounting of army atrocities. To the *Washington Post*'s correspondent, this fact bears a sinister significance: because we *knew* about these things, presumably we *approved* of them. But the sad truth is that there was no point in making representations to a military institution over which we had absolutely no leverage.

In retrospect, perhaps a loud and direct denunciation in some public forum—say, the United Nations Human Rights Commission—would have served our own national purposes better. I for one certainly think so. But let no one be deceived: it would not have moved the Guatemalan military one millimeter in the right direction.

PRIOR TO his visit to Guatemala, President Clinton stopped off in El Salvador. In the foreign-policy debates of the 1980's, this country loomed almost as large in the American consciousness as China. Its civil war, we were repeatedly told by the guardians of the liberal conscience, gave us only two alternatives: entering into peace negotiations with the Marxist guerrillas organized in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), who had earned the right to rule their country, or abetting certain genocide by the government-sponsored military and death squads—in effect, another Guatemala.

In the event, neither happened. The Reagan administration persisted in supporting an elected civilian government as well as military operations to contain and defeat the insurgency. This policy exacted a considerable human cost, but El Salvador today is blessed by a degree of civic peace and institutional normality unprecedented in its history. It is also experiencing high rates of economic growth. The guerrillas are now in the unicameral National Assembly, where they vote and sit on committees. If this is not a policy success, one wonders what would be.

In light of what has happened in El Salvador since the end of the war, it is especially interesting to recall the debates of the 1980's. The implicit and sometimes explicit assumption of critics of the Reagan administration—in Congress and the media, in the churches and the human-rights community—was that, in reluctantly taking up arms, the FMLN guerrillas embodied the desires of the repressed majority of the country. Now the dirty little secret can be told, and, to the discomfiture of the critics, it turns out to be just the opposite. The repressed majority of the country wanted a government *not* of the FMLN but of the nationalist Right, whose emblematic figure was the late Roberto d'Aubuisson, a founder of the ARENA party and shady eminence of the death squads.

So much was this the will of the people of El Salvador that, in 1984, the CIA was forced to rig elections there in order to permit José Napoleon Duarte, a candidate minimally acceptable to U.S. congressional Democrats, to win the presidency; anything else would have led to a vote in Washington cutting off military and economic aid. Similarly, the Reagan administration was forced into uncharacteristic adventures like land reform in order to prove—less to the Salvadoran peasants than to Catholic bishops in the United States—that in opposing Marxism in El Salvador we were not trying simply to shore up the socioeconomic status quo.

Today, although d'Abuisson has long since died, he remains a legendary if politically irrelevant presence in El Salvador, and his party continues to win consecutive presidential elections. Meanwhile, the FMLN, running unimpeded under its own banners, has consistently failed to garner as much as 30 percent of the vote (though it has managed to capture the city hall in San Salvador, the capital, and some provincial mayorships).

This sort of thing takes a lot of explaining away. In the most recent presidential election, which more or less coincided with President Clinton's visit, the correspondent of the *New York Times*, forced to report on the eve of voting that the ARENA candidate was running ahead in the polls, tried to minimize the fact by emphasizing how low the turnout rate was expected to be, thus presumably demonstrating the growing political alienation of ordinary Salvadorans. To make the point more directly, the *Times* reporter conscripted Reverend José Maria Tojeira, rector of the Central American University, to say that while "ARENA is more moderate [now] than in d'Aubuisson's day, . . . it's in the hands of rich people who don't favor social change." The next day, 52 percent of the voters cast their ballots for ARENA's candidate, a thirty-nine-year-old academic named Francisco Flores. Even with a reduced voter turnout (in fact the turnout ran between 40 and 50 percent of the electorate), there is no way this number can be construed to represent only or even principally "rich people who don't favor social change."

After the election, readers of the *Times* were told hopefully that the "democratic transformation" of El Salvador would have been "even more remarkable if the FMLN . . . had been able to build on

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previous electoral victories"—that is, in plain English, if it had managed to do better than 29 percent in the presidential race. But if the test of a country's "democratic transformation" is the specific electoral outcome favored by the *Times*, then El Salvador, along with dozens of other countries, may never arrive at its destination. In fact, it is the *participation* of the Front in the electoral process and local government—as opposed to its former preference for terror, kidnapping, and political assassination—that speaks most eloquently to the quality of the country's "democratic transformation."

But one must not be too hard on the *Times*. Even in the most earnest precincts of "progressive" journalism, a few inconvenient facts do manage to creep in at the margins. Thus, in a profile of the president-elect, we were informed that Francisco Flores had decided to enter politics only when the Marxist guerrillas killed his father-in-law, who in the late 1980's had served as chief of staff to the democratically-elected President Federico Cristiani. In the same article it also emerged that, for his part, the candidate of the FMLN, one Francisco Guardado, had been unable to allay widespread popular apprehensions in El Salvador with regard to the past activities of his movement; in effect, Guardado "could not overcome aversions to a Left remembered in El Salvador as violent and destructive." Just *why* the Left should be so remembered in El Salvador was something that readers of the *Times* were tactfully left to puzzle out on their own.

ON HIS March tour of the area, President Clinton also called at Honduras and Nicaragua. Press coverage of those stops focused mainly on the damage from Hurricane Mitch—the ostensible occasion for Clinton's visit—as well as on the role of U.S. active and reserve forces in helping stricken inhabitants reconstruct their shattered lives. Still, considering the media's lurid preoccupation with the seamy details of life under previous right-wing regimes in Guatemala and El Salvador, it might seem curious that no one was interested in revisiting the recent political history of Nicaragua and the role of U.S. policy there. But perhaps it is not so curious after all.

In the late 1970's, thanks in no small part to the maladroit policies of the Carter administration, Nicaragua, with hardly a pause for breath, went straight from an old-fashioned dictatorship of the Right under the Somoza dynasty to a more "modern" dictatorship of the Marxist-Leninist Left—the Sandinista Front. By the time Ronald Reagan assumed the American presidency in January 1981, the country was flooded with Cuban, Bulgarian, and East German "economists," political commissars, and specialists in police, intelligence, and military matters, and the regime boasted an army and police force bigger than that of its predecessor by several orders of magnitude. Moderate members of the original anti-Somoza *junta* had long since been pushed out of power by the Communists, and were living under the threat of mob violence and worse.

None of this, however, fazed liberal Democrats in the U.S. Congress or their allies in the media, who reserved their indignation for the local opponents of the newly-installed Sandinista government, tarring them with the *somocista* brush. This tactic enjoyed a broad measure of plausibility in 1981 and 1982, when most of the armed Nicaraguan opposition to the Sandinistas was indeed concentrated among former officers of the disbanded National Guard, who were operating from bases in Honduras with the counsel and assistance of officers dispatched from the Argentine military dictatorship (and, it was subsequently revealed, with active assistance from the CIA).

By 1983 and 1984, however, the anti-Sandinista movement had grown into a genuinely popular national cause—far more popular, in fact, than the cause of the Sandinistas themselves had ever been. Yet the anti-Communist partisans ("*contras*") who appeared more or less by spontaneous generation in Nicaragua were immediately denounced in this country as "rightists," and worse. As Robert S. Leiken shows in his forthcoming study of the period, *A Picture Held Us Captive: Nicaragua in the American Imagination*, no anti-Communist insurgency in history—including the rebel movement in Afghanistan—ever received such negative treatment in the American press, particularly in television news. And as for the U.S. Congress, during the second Reagan administration (1985-89), the near-totality of Democratic effort in Central America was aimed at ending U.S. support for the *contras*—which is to say, at rescuing the Sandinistas from the consequences of their own tyrannical misrule.

Just why so many Democratic members of Congress were so active in the anti-anti-Sandinista campaign is difficult to say. Few, surely, were sympathetic to Marxism in any form. Many may have felt that, having propped up the Somoza regime for so many years—in fact, American support had been spotty, and by the mid-to-late 70's had veered from encouragement of Somoza to outright hostility—the United States "owed" it to the Nicaraguan people to give any successor regime the benefit of the doubt. As in the case of El Salvador, there was also

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an unconscious and quite false assumption that the vast majority of Nicaraguans were leftists of some sort or other. When it came to Nicaragua, many Americans appeared to believe that the test of any authentic and truly representative government was not whether it had been elected by popular vote, or even whether it was good or bad for Nicaraguans, much less whether it was allied with Cuba and the Soviet Union, but rather the degree to which it was anti-American. On that score, at least, the Sandinistas passed with flying colors.

All this would be put to the test in 1990. In that year, the Sandinistas, apparently believing the propaganda of their admirers in the United States and Western Europe, chose to fall into the trap of holding presidential elections. So sure were they of victory that their supporters around the world flooded American embassies with letters demanding that we "respect the results of the Nicaraguan elections." The outcome—a smashing victory for the anti-Sandinista forces led by Violeta Chamorro over Sandinista President Daniel Ortega—was quite possibly the most devastating ideological defeat the Western intellectual Left has ever experienced.

Clearly, this was not the result we had been asked to "respect." Nor did the Sandinistas themselves respect it. Once ejected by popular vote, they rushed with indecent haste to "privatize" the vast property holdings they had confiscated after 1979, with themselves as the beneficiaries. But not even this looting expedition—a huge *piñata*, as it was called—was enough to unmask them once and for all in the eyes of their well-wishers. Immediately after the elections of 1990, former President Jimmy Carter rushed to Violeta Chamorro's house in the capital city of Managua to urge her, in the name of "national reconciliation," to retain for the Sandinistas a measure of power in the new government. She graciously, but mistakenly, concurred: until very recently, the Nicaraguan army remained the Sandinista army, and its commander, General Humberto Ortega, was the same man who had commanded it in the 1980's. The result has been truly lamentable: neither genuine national reconciliation nor, thanks largely to unresolved claims to expropriated property, a serious recovery of Nicaragua's economy.

Since the United States is in a forgiveness-begging mood these days, one is almost tempted to suggest that former President Carter personally ask the pardon of the Nicaraguan people for his two-decade-long role in bringing about their present plight—first by quickening Somoza's hopes in the late 1970's that he could somehow remain in power, then by imposing an arms embargo that made it impossible to persuade the National Guard to eject Somoza when the dictator entered his political death agonies a short time later, finally by rushing back to the country to save the Sandinistas' bacon (or what was left of it) after they had been roundly defeated at the ballot box. As long as contrition is the new national style, ought we not spread it around?

THERE ARE many people today in Washington and elsewhere who sincerely believe that the Soviet Union was never a threat during the cold war, and that, in opposing it, the United States was uselessly wasting time and resources. For such people, there was no danger of Sovietization, much less of Cubanization, in Central America, and U.S. efforts to combat this danger were unjustified if not wholly delusory.

Most Americans, however, did not believe this at the time and do not believe it now. For them, the problem was how best to face the Soviet-Cuban challenge. Without question, in some countries we faced it more deftly, more humanely, and more intelligently than in others. But our success or failure was determined as much by local conditions and the allies we were able to find as it was by our own perspicacity or lack of it. Central America was certainly one of the more morally difficult venues in which to fight the cold war, for the task there was not only to defeat Communists and their allies but to help construct a civic order qualitatively better than anything in the past.

In setting about that latter task, we did not achieve miracles. But no one looking with an unprejudiced eye can deny that the region today is far better off than it has ever been before, and that it is assuredly far better off than it would have been with Marxist guerrillas in power in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. On that score, at least, there is no cause for regret or apology, nor should any be offered.

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Building Hitler's Bomb

Jeremy Bernstein

ANYONE WHO has studied the effort to develop atomic energy in Germany during World War II immediately confronts three questions. Were German scientists trying to make a nuclear weapon? If so, how close did they come to succeeding? And if they had succeeded, would they have turned the weapon over to Hitler? All three questions have been answered in very different ways, but before proceeding to analyze them it is important to clarify what we mean by "German scientists."

In December 1938, the German physical chemists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann became the first to observe the fissioning of atomic nuclei. Bombarding the heavy element uranium with slow neutrons, they expected to come up with a nucleus of comparable mass but instead were mysteriously confronted with end products at least one of which was the relatively light nucleus barium, roughly half the weight of uranium. A month later, the Austrian-born Jewish physicists Lise Meitner and her nephew Otto Frisch—who had taken refuge in Scandinavia—correctly and momentously inferred from the Hahn-Strassmann observation that the uranium nucleus had been split in two. Neither Meitner, who had been a colleague of Hahn's in Berlin, nor Frisch, who had been in Hamburg, can be counted among the "German scientists."

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The same goes for Rudolf Peierls, a Jew who had emigrated to England from Germany. It was a 1940 memorandum of Peierls and Frisch (by that time also in England) that persuaded the Allies an atomic bomb was a real possibility. According to Frisch and Peierls, if you could separate a relatively modest amount of the rare uranium isotope U-235 from the common uranium isotope U-238, you could generate an explosive nuclear reaction. Prior to this it was thought that tons would be required—an amount so massive that scientists like Niels Bohr had decided that nuclear weapons were a practical impossibility.

Nor can one count among "German scientists" such physicists as James Franck or Hans Bethe or, needless to say, Albert Einstein, all of them German Jews or Germans of Jewish ancestry and all of them driven from the country in the early 1930's. Or non-Germans like John von Neumann and Eugene Wigner, Hungarian Jews who were beginning their careers in the German university system before they, too, were forced to emigrate. Or Italians like Emilio Segrè and Enrico Fermi, compelled to leave Italy because of the German-inspired racial laws. (Segrè was a Jew, Fermi's wife was Jewish.)

Even inside Germany itself there were scientists who should not be included in the list. Strassmann himself, an avid anti-Nazi, was deprived of his livelihood during the war. And then there was the Nobelist Max von Laue, who publicly refused to deny Einstein the credit for the theory of relativity,

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something most other German physicists were all too ready to do. Similarly, there was Gustav Hertz, a physicist of Jewish ancestry who shared the 1925 Nobel Prize with James Franck and whose students and colleagues hid him in the Siemens industrial laboratories in Berlin for the duration of the war.

Finally, there were German scientists with acceptable racial pedigrees but unacceptable academic credentials. One of them was Manfred von Ardenne, an inventor and entrepreneur, who managed to persuade the German post office to sponsor work in nuclear physics on his estate in Berlin. In early 1941, one of his associates, Fritz Houtermans—who had been jailed by both the Soviet secret police and the Gestapo—observed that plutonium (as it came to be called) was an even better nuclear explosive than uranium. (The same discovery had been made independently by the more conventional German physicist C. F. von Weizsäcker and by the American physicist Louis Turner a few months earlier.) Von Ardenne's group also made significant progress in separating the uranium isotopes. While their achievements were more or less ignored by the German scientific establishment, after the war the Russians thought them important enough to ship Von Ardenne, his equipment, and his colleagues east, where they helped to make the first Soviet bomb.

Who then is left?

In the fall of 1939, German Army Ordnance decided it was imperative to study nuclear fission for its possible use in weaponry. The military agency took over the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin and began drafting physicists and chemists to work on the project. The most important "draftee" was Werner Heisenberg (1901-76), certainly one of the greatest physicists of this century and a man whose prestige in Germany was enormous.

In addition to Heisenberg, some 60 scientists from various institutions eventually joined the project. They came to call themselves the *Uranverein*, the Uranium Club. Clearly these are the German scientists one wants to consider—they, and the industrial infrastructure that served them. One notorious component of the latter was the Degussa company, which had taken over the Auer metallurgic company—its previous owners had been insufficiently Aryan—and used slave labor to produce uranium oxide for the *Uranverein*. It, too, should be counted.*

We may now return to the three questions. Was the *Uranverein*, first of all, trying to make a nuclear weapon? There cannot be much dispute about this, at least before early 1942, when the Army withdrew from the initiative. From then on, the project, now funded by the Reich Research Council, focused mostly on making a functioning nuclear reactor. This shift of emphasis enabled the Germans, and their apologists, to claim after the war that the project had really been aimed at the peaceful use of nuclear energy. But the claim was false. Once plutonium was discovered, reactors *became* weapons, by virtue of the fact that they could be used to manufacture that element. The *Uranverein* was very explicit about this in appealing to the government for funding. There was also a smaller program to try to design some sort of exploding reactor that—like a miniature Chernobyl—could spread radioactive material over a large area.

So to the first question my answer is yes. But how close were the Germans to their goal? To this the common answer is, not very.

Various explanations have been given for this. One is that Germany was being pressed hard by Allied bombardment. Another is that, war or no war, it lacked the industrial capacity for the job. A third is that the *Uranverein* was not really trying all that hard, or was even attempting to sabotage the project. My own favored explanation is none of these, but rather simple incompetence.

One must keep in mind that by early December 1942, Enrico Fermi, with an infrastructure certainly no larger than that available to the *Uranverein*, had succeeded in making the first functioning nuclear reactor in an abandoned squash court at the University of Chicago. This was something the Germans never achieved. The difference is that our program had Fermi while the Germans had Heisenberg. Although his ego prevented him from acknowledging it, Heisenberg was not a good engineer. If the Germans, who started first, had been able to create a self-sustaining chain reaction, the whole project would have taken on a much greater sense of possibility.

Which brings me to the last question: would the scientists have turned the bomb over to Hitler? Here, our own experience may be relevant. Once the Manhattan Project was launched in December 1941, it came under the wing of the United States Army. Scientists were drafted and sent as soldiers to Los Alamos; in the beginning there was even talk of giving them simulated ranks and putting them into uniform. After the bomb was built, the Army took possession of what it had bought and

* Degussa is still in business. It has a Website with a smiling face, and one of its activities has been to supply Iraq with nuclear material.

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paid for. Although a few of the scientists involved tried to enter into the decision process, they had no say in what finally was done with the device. Can anyone imagine that things would have been different in Germany?

WHAT IS remarkable is that today, a half-century after the fact, the activities and intentions of the *Uranverein* still provoke debate. In 1993 the journalist Thomas Powers, in *Heisenberg's War*, tried to argue that Heisenberg deliberately sabotaged the German project by withholding knowledge about the bomb and even attempted to pass information about it to the Allies. Powers's book unleashed a hailstorm of protest. Now we have a book-length refutation of it in *Heisenberg and the Nazi Atomic Bomb Project* by the historian Paul Rose.*

How are such radical disagreements possible? After all, we are not trying to reconstruct a prehistoric civilization from a few drawings on the wall of a cave. This was a project that created a paper trail of hundreds and hundreds of documents. The principals were, at least until a few years ago, all alive and prepared to tell their stories. Let me give two examples that will show just how difficult a subject it nevertheless is.

Early in his book, Rose quotes what he refers to as a "bizarre letter," undated but purportedly written in the spring of 1970, from Heisenberg to an American woman named Ruth Nanda Anshen. Anshen was the editor and guiding spirit of a series of books by outstanding thinkers. Two of her authors were Heisenberg and the Columbia physicist I.I. Rabi, both of whom were also on her board of editors. Here is the letter, taken directly from Anshen's own book, *Biography of an Idea* (1986):

> I have finished reading in your "Perspectives in Humanism" series the volume written by Professor Rabi entitled *Science: The Center of Culture*. I should like to review this important volume. However, I must say to you that I shall have to take exception to Dr. Rabi's statement that "such a tremendous undertaking as Oak Ridge [where much of our work in isotope separation was performed], with huge, combined efforts of science, engineering, industry, and the Army, would have been impossible in bomb-ridden Germany. . . ."
>
> Dr. Hahn, Dr. von Laue, and I falsified the mathematics in order to avoid the development of the atom bomb by German scientists.

When I read this letter in Rose's book, I found it not "bizarre" but incredible. Heisenberg was always careful not to make explicit claims of this nature. He let others do that for him: principally the journalist Robert Jungk, whose 1958 book, *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns*, argued that German nuclear physicists had "obeyed the voice of conscience and attempted to prevent the construction of atomic bombs"; and, after Heisenberg's death in 1976, Powers and even his widow made similar assertions. Why then would Heisenberg issue so sweeping a statement in so apparently casual a manner? Why had he not revealed this startling information in any of his own published accounts of his wartime activities? And what does "falsified the mathematics" mean? The atomic bomb did not involve a mathematical equation that one could "falsify," but rather hundreds upon hundreds of engineering details.

And why the mention of Hahn and Laue as his co-conspirators? Hahn was not a mathematician but a physical chemist. While he disliked the Nazis, he did like his creature comforts, and there is no indication he ever risked his life for anything except helping Lise Meitner to escape Germany. (She, for her part, was so infuriated by Hahn's generally laissez-faire attitude toward the Nazis that after the war she wrote him an exceedingly angry letter.) And as for Laue, although he was at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, he had nothing to do with the *Uranverein*, and in any case was not a nuclear physicist. In short, anyone with the slightest awareness of these matters would find Heisenberg's claim about Laue and Hahn totally absurd—as Heisenberg would surely have known.

Rose notes another oddity. Anshen gave her papers, including all her letters, to Columbia University; this document is not among them. Still, Rose thinks it "beyond doubt that the letter was genuine."

Upon reading Rose's book, I decided to check the matter out. My colleague Cathryn Carson, who has studied much of the Heisenberg *nachlass*, confirmed that she had come across correspondence between Heisenberg and Anshen, and she approached Helmut Rechenberg, who is in charge of the Heisenberg archive in Munich (and with whom I have strongly disputed Heisenberg's wartime activities), to let me see it. There are in fact three letters.

THE FIRST, from Anshen to Heisenberg, is in English and is dated May 30, 1970. In it she requests that Heisenberg write a review of Rabi's book for inclusion in a new series she was editing. Heisenberg replied on June 19 in German. In this

* University of California Press, 391 pp., $35.00.

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letter, a page and a half in length, he asks Anshen to inform Rabi of his reluctance to write the review on account of his disagreements with Chapter 7, on the German atomic-bomb project. He is especially upset that Rabi should have accepted the argument—first put forward by the Dutch-American physicist Samuel Goudsmit in his book, *Alsos*—that the Germans would have been only too happy to turn the bomb over to Hitler had they been able to build it.

It is not difficult to understand why Heisenberg should have objected to Rabi's reliance on Goudsmit. The latter had led a mission named "*Alsos*"—"grove," in Greek—to follow the advancing Allied armies into Germany and capture as many of the *Uranverein* as possible along with their equipment. In the event, nine members of the "club," including Heisenberg, Hahn, and von Weizsäcker, were interned in England for six months in an estate near Cambridge named Farm Hall. British intelligence had wired the place to record everything the Germans said; the transcripts, which were not released until 1992, form the most vivid record we have of the real thoughts of the *Uranverein*. Goudsmit clearly had access to them in writing his book, and he and Heisenberg, and later von Weizsäcker, subsequently got into a bitter exchange of letters and articles over his interpretation of what they contained.

The rest of the June 1970 letter to Anshen is Heisenberg at his self-exculpatory best. He constructs some sort of murky parallel: Rabi, he writes, "completely overlooks the fact that the German physicists had about the same kind of psychological attitude toward putting a bomb in Hitler's hand as many Americans have today about the possibility of ending the American war with North Vietnam by dropping a hydrogen bomb on Hanoi." He then ends by asking Anshen to take these matters up with Rabi so that they can avoid a public dispute. There is no mention of Oak Ridge or the Allied bombing of Germany; no mention of falsifying data; no mention of Hahn and Laue.

On July 9, Anshen replied, saying that she had spoken to Rabi and had decided it might be better if Heisenberg did not review his book after all. She writes: "Professor Rabi would not wish to enter into a polemical discussion with so great a physicist as you are." Knowing Rabi as I did, I can just see him concocting this phrase—"so great a physicist as you are"—with some glee. Rabi knew his man. He had offered Heisenberg a job at Columbia in 1939, on Heisenberg's last visit to America just before the war. As Rabi later told me, Heisenberg turned him down on the grounds that he did not want to lose his tenure in the German university system.

What should we make of all this? Unless and until someone comes up with the original of the letter that Rose quotes from Anshen's book, I shall regard it as a chimera.

NOW FOR the second example of how difficult it is to determine Heisenberg's role. This is a more complicated story, and I have to take a certain responsibility for it. Beginning in November 1977, on and off for two years, I conducted a series of tape-recorded interviews with Hans Bethe that ultimately led to a three-part *New Yorker* profile. During the war, Bethe (who arrived in this country in 1935) had been the head of the theoretical division at Los Alamos and therefore in the inner circle of J. Robert Oppenheimer and his advisers. In the course of our conversations I asked him whether, while working on the bomb, the scientists at Los Alamos knew about the status of the German nuclear project. Such intelligence would have been a closely held secret at the time, but now Bethe shared some important information with me.

It seems that in September 1941 Heisenberg had come to Copenhagen, where he met Niels Bohr. Denmark was then an occupied country.* The ostensible reason for Heisenberg's visit was to take part in a conference of astronomers organized by the so-called German Cultural Institute, an outfit set up to distribute Nazi propaganda. Bohr boycotted the conference and there was some question as to whether he would see Heisenberg at all, even though in the late 1920's and early 1930's the two of them had hammered out together what is known as the "Copenhagen interpretation" of quantum mechanics, still in use today. It seems Bohr wanted at least to invite Heisenberg for dinner, but his wife Margrethe, who never much liked Heisenberg, objected; she felt that his whole visit was "hostile."

Bohr evidently managed to persuade her. After dinner, he and Heisenberg had a private talk, the contents of which have become one of the most controverted aspects of Heisenberg's entire wartime record. Of this discussion, Bohr's son Aage, his father's closest wartime confidant and a Nobel Prize-winning physicist in his own right, has written:

> In a private conversation with my father, Heisenberg brought up the question of the military applications of atomic energy. My fa-

* Denmark was not the only occupied country Heisenberg visited in the course of the war. In December 1943, he went to Krakow on the invitation of his brother's old schoolmate Hans Frank, then enthusiastically engaged, as the governor-general of Poland, in supervising the extermination of Polish Jewry; one wonders what they talked about.

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ther was very reticent and expressed his skepticism because of the great technical difficulties that had to be overcome, but he had the impression that Heisenberg thought that the new possibilities [perhaps an implicit reference to plutonium] could decide the outcome of the war if the war dragged on.

Then what happened? According to my informant Hans Bethe, Heisenberg gave Bohr a drawing of something purporting to be the design of a German nuclear weapon. Later this drawing was "transmitted to us in Los Alamos." I did not ask Bethe how much later, and I also did not ask him what he meant by "transmitted." He told me that he and Edward Teller, asked to analyze the drawing, saw at once that it was a nuclear reactor. "But our conclusion was, when seeing it, these Germans are totally crazy. Do they want to throw a reactor down on London?"

My *New Yorker* profile of Bethe, which included this quotation, marked the first time anyone had ever mentioned such a sketch in print. Both Powers and Rose linger over the event, but they draw from it almost opposite conclusions.

Powers is convinced that, in passing classified information to Bohr, Heisenberg committed the act of a traitor—a traitor, that is, to Germany. In other words, Heisenberg as Powers portrays him is to be considered not a Nazi collaborator but a hero of the Resistance. For Rose, by contrast, in showing the drawing Heisenberg meant to intimidate Bohr, to convince him that, since the atomic bomb would play a role in the forthcoming "*Pax Nazica*" (Rose's term), he should resolve to throw in his lot with the German scientists.

BOTH POWERS and Rose have persuaded themselves that Heisenberg really did hand Bohr a secret sketch of a German nuclear weapon of some sort. But did he? In 1994, Abraham Pais, Bohr's biographer, called me into his office at Rockefeller University. Some months earlier, Powers had asked him what he knew about the drawing. It seems that Powers had received a letter from Aage Bohr stating flatly that "Heisenberg certainly drew no sketch of a reactor during his visit in 1941. The operation of a reactor was not discussed at all." Nor, according to Aage, did Bohr know anything about plutonium until he was briefed about the Allied project after escaping from Denmark in the fall of 1943.

I was taken aback by this news from Pais. Had I propagated a serious error? I now queried everyone I knew who had had a senior role at Los Alamos. Bethe repeated in writing what he had told me earlier; no one else seemed to know anything. Then I made contact with the late Robert Serber, one of Oppenheimer's closest collaborators and a man noted for both his excellent memory and his extensive store of documents. Serber not only filled me in on what had happened but also sent me some corroborating papers.

When Bohr got to England in September 1943, he was briefed by the British on the Allied nuclear-weapons program. Whether he told them what he knew about the German program is uncertain. But upon arriving in the United States in early December, he met with General Leslie R. Groves, who was in charge of the Manhattan Project, and apparently showed him some kind of drawing. Groves was sufficiently alarmed to alert Oppenheimer, and on December 31, just after Bohr arrived at Los Alamos with his son, Oppenheimer called together a select group of staff members to meet them.

Serber gave me a copy of the letter Oppenheimer sent to Groves after the meeting. It lists the attendees, and I managed to contact all of those still alive: Victor Weisskopf, Robert Bacher, Aage Bohr, Teller, and Bethe, in addition to Serber himself, who recalled coming in a little late and being told by Oppenheimer that they were discussing a proposal of Heisenberg's for a nuclear weapon and being shown the drawing, which he recognized as a reactor.

No one I spoke with could say whether the drawing was supposed to have been made by Heisenberg or was done by Bohr from memory, and the drawing itself seems to have vanished. In any case, Bethe and Teller wrote up a report showing that such a reactor could never explode like a nuclear weapon. *No* reactor could: this is what Frisch and Peierls had understood in 1940. A reactor operates with U-238, which only fissions when it is struck by slow neutrons, while a bomb is made of U-235 or plutonium, both of which are fissionable by fast neutrons; the entire explosive reaction in a bomb lasts only a hundredth of a microsecond.

Whether Heisenberg ever really apprehended this distinction is another subject of vehement debate. He himself said he did, and Powers agrees with him. Goudsmit and Rose say he did not, and I agree with them. The Farm Hall transcripts record a discussion among the Germans just after they first learned about Hiroshima, and it is clear to me that they lacked even a rudimentary understanding of how a nuclear weapon works. In a few days, Heisenberg figured it out and gave his fellow de-

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tainees a lecture; from their comments, it is obvious they were hearing about all this for the first time.

In reading Bethe and Teller's report, I realized that this was not just any reactor they were analyzing but a particular design Heisenberg had clung to even though a number of junior theorists in the *Uranverein* had demonstrated its inefficiencies. Specifically, the design involved layers of uranium metal submerged in "heavy water"—water consisting of oxygen and heavy hydrogen, a rare isotope with one extra neutron. The Germans used heavy water to try to moderate the neutrons in their reactor designs, but it was very hard to come by and they never had enough of it. To me, this detail signified that the drawing was indeed something that had come out of the *Uranverein*.

But how to reconcile all this with Aage Bohr's absolute certainty—which he conveyed to me once again in a message delivered by Pais—that no reactor was discussed when his father met Heisenberg in 1941 and that no drawing changed hands? Here I will hazard a guess: the drawing came to Bohr from someone else on some other occasion. Indeed, the notion that Heisenberg gave Bohr the drawing simply does not fit his character. Although never a Nazi, Heisenberg was a patriotic German, and both during and immediately after the war he told several people he had wanted the Germans to win. As he confided to Bethe, he was afraid that if the Allies were victorious they would level Germany and destroy German culture; but if the Germans won, the "good Germans" would take over and restore things to the way they had been before the Nazis.

What I think happened is that someone else from the *Uranverein* must have visited Bohr and given him the information. A likely candidate, it seems to me, is the physicist Hans Jensen, who was in Copenhagen in 1942 and did discuss the German program with Bohr. Since Bohr was then still persuaded that, in any practical sense, nuclear weapons were impossible, he probably filed Jensen's report somewhere in his head until he was briefed in England about the Allied project. Then he recalled what he had been told and, perhaps, drew a picture. I cannot prove this, but there are some things about this history that we may never know for sure.

POSTSCRIPT. WHEN I first saw the Farm Hall transcripts in 1992, I thought they had the makings of an interesting play. This is precisely what the well-known British playwright Michael Frayn has undertaken to do in *Copenhagen*, which is now enjoying a successful run in London.

Frayn is not a physicist, but he has evidently read a great deal, and for the rest he has let his imagination wander. Some things—facts, names—he has gotten wrong; they are minor. But what is not minor is a bit of dialogue he has given to Bohr. Referring to Werner Heisenberg, Bohr says, "A White Jew. That's what the Nazis called him. He taught so-called Jewish physics. And refused to stop. He stuck with Einstein and relativity, in spite of the most terrible attacks."

Now, it is true that Heisenberg had been attacked for doing "Jewish physics," and had even been called a "White Jew." But in July 1938, with the help of a family connection, he was vetted and cleared by Heinrich Himmler himself, who took the occasion to suggest he dissociate himself from the "personal and political attitude of the scientists involved." In other words, German physicists could keep relativity, but without Einstein.

This understanding of things was duly codified at a conference in the Tyrolean Alps in November 1942 attended by 30 German scientists, including Heisenberg. The summary report, written by von Weizsäcker, stated that "one must reject the imposition of the physical relativity theory into a world philosophy of relativism, as has been attempted by the Jewish propaganda press of the previous era." The report also stated that "Einstein [had] merely followed up already existing ideas consistently and added the cornerstone." This does not sound like sticking with Einstein; far from it.

Still, Frayn does seem to me to have captured something of Heisenberg's moral ambiguity. His Heisenberg is neither a Resistance hero nor a simple Nazi collaborator—in *Copenhagen*, he does not pass the drawing on to Bohr—but something more interesting and perhaps more troubling. Frayn raises the question of why Heisenberg and, for that matter, Bohr never did the relatively simple calculation performed by Frisch and Peierls: the one that showed a bomb could be built. Certainly both of them were capable of it. The suggestion of Frayn's play is that somewhere deep in their psyches they were held back because they did not want to know the answer.

Perhaps so. In any case, this is another thing about the history I have been recounting that will probably never be known for sure.

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OBSERVATIONS

Was Kissinger Right?

Gabriel Schoenfeld

SERVING AS National Security Adviser and Secretary of State to Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger dazzled the world for eight years with his masterful performance on the diplomatic stage. Over the course of his term in office, every instrument of modern statecraft—shuttle diplomacy, crisis management, square- and round-table negotiations, global nuclear alerts—was employed to stunning effect, if not to approbation, in the world media and press.

Yet when American voters ejected the hapless Gerald Ford from office in 1976 and returned Kissinger to private life, many were left wondering whether what they had just witnessed was nothing more than a botched circus performance, a high-wire act conducted without a net. In every direction one looked, America's standing had plummeted to a new postwar low and the prospect was one of further disarray, chaos, and retreat.

Though the United States had entered the 1970's as the strongest industrial power in the world, beginning with the OPEC embargo of October 1973 a handful of oil-rich but militarily insignificant states had managed to put the economies of the United States and its allies on the rack. Though Kissinger and Nixon had bent every effort to extricate the United States with honor from the war in Southeast Asia, in 1975 came ignominious and agonizing defeat. And though Kissinger, Nixon, and Ford had striven to forge a more constructive relationship with America's most dangerous adversary, by 1976 détente was in ruins as the USSR recklessly ignited brushfires in distant corners of the globe and raced ahead in a menacing arms build-up.

Victory, it is said, has a hundred fathers but defeat is an orphan. In *Years of Renewal*, the third volume of his monumental trilogy of memoirs,* Kissinger does not rush to claim paternity for the cascade of disasters that came to a culmination in the Ford presidency. In part, as his very title suggests, Kissinger denies that the period was a disaster at all: the Ford administration, he writes, "could take pride in a long list of foreign-policy accomplishments." Yet at the same time he hardly ignores the inescapable facts. Instead, while accepting responsibility for a number of misjudgments and missteps, he freely points a finger of blame: at the terrible cards the two administrations he served had been dealt by the presidencies of Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy; at the malignant political legacy left by Richard Nixon's personal flaws; at the isolationism that seized the American Left and Congress as Vietnam dragged on; at the betrayal of national security by the leadership of the CIA and its congressional overseers; at the ineptitude and weakness of key players on Ford's White House staff; and at the failure of American conservatives, especially including the neoconservatives around COMMENTARY, to rally to the flag of his embattled policies.

Some of the finger-pointing that one finds throughout Kissinger's book appears to be transparently self-serving, the wily Machiavellian now skillfully manipulating the past

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in order to secure his own place in it. As his account is buttressed, however, by a wealth of documentation, one would do well to consider that much of it may be justified.

SORTING OUT the issues is no easy task. *Years of Renewal* ranges widely, stepping back to traverse ground already covered in the preceding volumes of the series while presenting in close but immensely readable detail every aspect of the Ford administration's diplomacy from its maneuvering through the labyrinth of the Cyprus crisis to its fumbling in the dark comedy of the *Mayaguez* affair.* Undoubtedly, however, two of the most important issues it takes up revolve around the war in Indochina and U.S. relations with the USSR.

Consider, to begin with, Kissinger's account of American policy toward Cambodia and Vietnam. When Gerald Ford assumed office following Richard Nixon's resignation on August 9, 1974, the Paris Peace Accords had already been on the books for a year and a half. Kissinger contends that he and Nixon had been clear from the start about the flaws in this settlement between North and South Vietnam. He never harbored any "illusions," he writes, that Hanoi's "dour, fanatical leaders had abandoned their lifetime struggle." As he warned Nixon in a memo at the time, only an American readiness to intervene could uphold the precarious ceasefire. But he also expected—"naively," he notes here—that the antiwar movement in the United States "would be able to find satisfaction in the ending of hostilities" and that its agitations against American assistance to Saigon would cease.

As Kissinger predicted, the North Vietnamese did flagrantly violate the 1973 agreement from day one. But as he failed to predict, the "peace movement" in the United States did not die out; as quickly became evident, it would settle for nothing less than a complete rout of America's allies in Indochina. And by the time that rout did in fact begin, America's capacity to answer Hanoi with military power had been stripped away by events well beyond Kissinger's control.

One such event was Watergate, which by the autumn of 1973 had thoroughly undermined executive authority and poisoned the American body politic, destroying in the process the last vestiges of political will for further American exertions in Southeast Asia. Only six months after the Paris Accords were concluded, Congress barred the further use of American force "in or over Indochina," rendering the agreement impossible to uphold. Despite Ford and Kissinger's intensive lobbying, the provision of supplies that might have given South Vietnam a chance to defend itself on its own was progressively slashed by Congress, from $2.1 billion in 1973 to $1 billion in 1974 to a paltry $700 million in 1975 (not all of which was actually disbursed).

AS SOUTH VIETNAM, deprived of sustenance and support, began to crumble, even longtime congressional supporters of the war turned their backs. Although Kissinger finds villains across the political spectrum, he singles out for special censure the late Democratic Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, "scourge of détente and Ford administration critic for its alleged softness on Communism," who in early 1975 abandoned his perduring support for the war and, to "our immense surprise and huge disappointment," voted to throw South Vietnam to the wolves just as it entered a last desperate struggle to survive.

With the United States reduced to the role of bystander, the fall came swiftly. Cambodia succumbed first. As he does also with Vietnam, Kissinger retells the riveting tale, recounting how, as the Khmer Rouge closed in on the capital city of Phnom Penh in early April 1975, the United States offered a number of Cambodian officials a chance to escape. The reply addressed to the U.S. ambassador by Sirik Matak, a former Cambodian prime minister, and reprinted by Kissinger in full, is one of the more important documents of the entire Vietnam-war era.

> Dear Excellency and Friend:
>
> I thank you very sincerely for your letter and for your offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a cowardly fashion. As for you, and in particular for your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people which has chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection, and we can do nothing about it.
>
> You leave, and my wish is that you and your country will find happiness under this sky. But, mark it well, that if I shall die here on the spot and in my country that I love, it is no matter, because we are all born and must die. I have only committed this mistake of believing in you [the Americans].
>
> Please accept, Excellency and dear friend, my faithful and friendly sentiments.

Immediately after the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh, writes Kissinger, Sirik Matak was shot in the stomach and left to die over the course of three days from his untreated wounds.

In the beginning, middle, and end of this episode, Kissinger shows to telling effect, the barbaric nature of the Communist Khmer Rouge was painted over in soothing tones

* This latest volume is well supplemented by another new book, *The Kissinger Transcripts* (New Press, 515 pp., $30.00). Though marred by the tendentious commentary of its editor, William Burr, it provides the official memoranda of Kissinger's highly classified conversations with Leonid Brezhnev, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and other Communist leaders, offering an indelible picture of the virtuoso at work and an eye-opening glimpse of how diplomacy was actually carried out at the highest levels during some of the most dramatic moments of the nuclear age.

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by much of the American press. The *New York Times* was the most flagrant offender. In one dispatch, its correspondent Sydney Schanberg described a ranking Khmer Rouge leader as a "French-educated intellectual" who wanted nothing more than "to fight against feudal privileges and social inequities." A bloodbath was unlikely, Schanberg reported: "since all are Cambodians, an accommodation will be found." As the last Americans were withdrawn, another upbeat article by Schanberg appeared under the headline, "Indochina Without Americans: For Most, a Better Life." In short order, the Khmer Rouge proceeded to march nearly two million of their fellow Cambodians to their deaths in the killing fields. Also in short order, Schanberg went on to greater glory and a Pulitzer prize.*

KISSINGER IS at his most bitter when judging those who contributed to the tragedy of Southeast Asia, writing that the period "still evokes a sinking feeling in me, composed in equal parts of sadness for the victims and shame for how they were abandoned." But if his most poignant regrets concern Vietnam, he also does not spare the lash when it comes to those whom he deems at fault for the collapse of détente, his grand strategic edifice aimed at a relaxation of tensions with the USSR and thus at easing the American burden not only in Vietnam but in the East-West struggle as a whole.

By the time Nixon took office in 1969, Kissinger maintains, the American public had been "drained by twenty years of cold-war exertions and the increasing frustrations with Vietnam." Under these circumstances, the challenge was to find a middle ground between two dangers: on the one hand, an abdication of the American responsibility for containing the Soviet bear and, on the other hand, a no less reckless decision to challenge it frontally. Instead, by means of a mixture of carrots and sticks, "we intended," writes Kissinger, "to nudge the Soviet colossus into transforming itself from a cause into a state capable of being influenced by traditional calculations of reward and punishment, thereby at first easing the cold war and ultimately transcending it."

But as Kissinger also recounts, such a happy transcendence of the conflict was not to occur, at least not on his watch. Although in Nixon's first term relations with the USSR had been relatively smooth, starting in 1972, the year that marked the apogee of détente, things began to unravel. The problem, in Kissinger's retelling, was not so much the conduct of Leonid Brezhnev and company but the unholy alliance between the American Left and Right that impeded the administration's best efforts to keep the Soviet Union restrained.

Liberals, their program of propitiating the USSR having been stolen and embraced by their nemesis Richard Nixon, now began embracing causes like human rights and initiatives on arms control that were more radical than those the administration itself was advancing—with the aim, in Kissinger's words, of going "where they thought Nixon could not follow them." After their triumph at the polls in the first post-Watergate elections of 1974, congressional Democrats proceeded systematically to deprive the administration of the implements it needed to punish the Soviet Union for misbehavior. The defense budget was progressively slashed, and the administration was forbidden by law from aiding anti-Soviet forces in pivot points like Angola where the USSR was demonstrating unprecedented global reach.

Conservatives, for their part, perceived Nixon's conciliatory rhetoric toward the USSR as both a betrayal of the anti-Communist cause and an opportunistic effort to expand his domestic political base, and they undertook to check his Soviet policy at every turn. On the Center-Right, Senator Jackson and his highly influential aide Richard Perle, in part out of an honest disagreement with policy and in part for crass political gain—Jackson planned to seek the presidential nomination of the Democratic party in 1976—appeared determined to throw one wrench after another into the works. In public and behind the scenes, these two men worked skillfully to deprive the administration of carrots, blocking the expansion of trade, derailing arms control through spurious and arcane objections to administration proposals, and demanding ever greater levels of Jewish emigration from the USSR (even as the Nixon and Ford administrations were making progress in this area behind the scenes).†

Particularly baneful, in Kissinger's telling, was the unrelenting hawkishness of Jackson's intellectual allies, the neoconservatives—here he singles out by name Irving Kristol, Midge Decter, and Norman Podhoretz. These figures, he writes, were zealots, whose own "defining"

* Although tucking them away in a footnote, Kissinger also provides the later and second thoughts of the journalist William Shawcross, whose highly influential book, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, had placed the blame for the Cambodian tragedy squarely on the United States. Wrote a repentant Shawcross in 1994: "[T]hose of us who opposed the American war in Indochina should be extremely humble in the face of the appalling aftermath: a form of genocide in Cambodia and horrific tyranny in both Vietnam and Laos. Looking back on my own coverage for the [London] *Sunday Times* of the South Vietnamese war effort of 1970-75, I think I concentrated too easily on the corruption and incompetence of the South Vietnamese and their American allies, was too ignorant of the inhuman Hanoi regime, and far too willing to believe that a victory by the Communists would provide a better future."

† As *The Kissinger Transcripts* make clear, Jackson also served as a useful foil to Kissinger in carrying out his negotiations with the Kremlin. He was constantly warning the Soviet leaders not to engage in behavior that Jackson might exploit for political gain.

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experience of moving from Left to Right had colored their thinking in destructive ways:

> Tactics bored them; they discerned no worthy goals for American foreign policy short of total and immediate victory. Their historical memory did not include the battles they had refused to join or the domestic traumas to which they so often contributed from the radical Left side of the barricades.

To this reproach, Kissinger adds the rueful observation that it was a "pity" the neoconservatives cast themselves in opposition to his Soviet policies, since in many respects his own analysis paralleled theirs:

> I shared their distrust of Communism and their apparent determination to thwart its aims. I thought once they realized that our goal was not to placate but to outmaneuver the Soviet Union, we would be able to join forces in a common cause.

Alas, it was not to be.

WHAT ARE we to make of this lengthy and eloquent *apologia pro vita sua* with its accompanying *tua culpa*?

On some matters, Kissinger's account is not easily disposed of. His description of President Ford's efforts to save South Vietnam, for example, efforts that continued right up to the horrific end, is a portrait of heroic perseverance unappreciated and unremarked. Upon assuming office in August 1974, Ford could easily have declared that America was done with the Indochina conflict and let the chips fall where they may; given the atmosphere at the time, in most quarters he would have been not blamed but praised. In this and other matters, Ford's image as a bumbler out of his depth is dispelled by Kissinger's account of a decent man, a straightshooter, "a Ford not a Lincoln" in Ford's own self-deprecating phrase, who chose the honorable course and paid a great personal and political price for his pains.

As for those whom Kissinger holds directly accountable for the fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia, his reckoning of their moral failure is in many ways the most affecting portion of this book. One comes away with a distinct sense of the agony involved in losing a war that one had not chosen to start while being hammered at home from all sides. In this connection, though, the fury Kissinger directs at Henry Jackson seems seriously misplaced. Jackson, after all, had been virtually alone among Democrats in sticking with an unpopular war for as long as he did. Whatever sins he committed in the quest for the presidential nomination of a party that was turning leftward and away from Democrats like himself, he cannot fairly be compared with the liberals who led the United States into the Vietnam fiasco in the 1960's and who then spent the 70's attacking those bent on getting the U.S. out without sacrificing every shred of self-respect.

But neither can Jackson's role be fairly compared to that of a player like Richard Nixon, whose conduct of foreign policy Kissinger here continues to honor and defend. One can debate endlessly whether or not the entire Nixon policy from 1969 to 1974 represented an unnecessary strategic retreat, or whether or not the Paris Accords were irredeemably flawed from the outset, designed only to secure a "decent interval" between the U.S. departure and South Vietnamese collapse. Some of Kissinger's arguments in refutation of this latter point, and in particular the statement of this supreme realist that he had "naively" failed to grasp the true aims of the peace movement, are difficult to credit. But wherever one comes down on these matters, the issue of Nixon's part in the tragic course of events cannot be blinked.

However great his grasp of global affairs, however sound or unsound his geostrategic approach, it cannot be emphasized enough that, as Kissinger acknowledges only in passing in this volume, any chance the United States had to ensure the survival of Cambodia and South Vietnam was destroyed by the Watergate burglary and the subsequent efforts to cover it up. Nixon's petty decisions in the Watergate affair not only lost him his own tenure in office and divided our own country but ended up costing the lives of millions in faraway lands, men and women like Sirik Matak whose only mistake had been to take America at its word. Nixon may subsequently have been rehabilitated in the eyes of some, but if one is to take seriously Kissinger's own vivid description of the far-flung and terrible consequences of the President's abdication of his basic responsibility to observe the law, this rehabilitation has come too soon.

NEXT, DÉTENTE. Kissinger makes a very strong case for the proposition that his policies were not, in fact, the accommodationist sellout to the USSR that they seemed to many on the Right at the time. It cannot be denied that Kissinger and Nixon's diplomacy in those years did reap dividends in some regions of the world, by, for example, entering the U.S. variable into the Sino-Soviet equation at a time when the risk of a nuclear shooting war between the two Communist rivals was curving upward; shutting out Soviet influence in the Middle East after the October 1973 Yom Kippur war; and going some distance toward defanging the European Left at a moment when it was infused with maximum energy from its campaign against the American presence in Vietnam.

Kissinger also argues cogently that, given the tremulous nature of the times, with America embroiled in a losing war, executive authority in a state of collapse, and the American defense budget being axed even

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as Moscow built up its forces, there was no realistic alternative to the attempt to establish some sort of *modus vivendi* with the Kremlin. Considering the utter irresponsibility of Congress in that period—one has only to recall the passage of the Tunney amendment barring U.S. aid to Angola just as the USSR and Cuba were pouring munitions and troops into that country, or the Church Committee hearings that effectively crippled the CIA—the notion that the U.S. could have mustered the political will to compete successfully with the USSR in an arms race, even given the growing constraints on the Soviet economy, seems dubious in the extreme.

In this light, there is a measure of merit in Kissinger's complaint that the neoconservatives exhibited little "understanding of or sympathy for the problems before a nonelected President taking over in the aftermath of Watergate and facing a hostile McGovernite Congress." Yet even as he lambastes neoconservatives for failing to grasp the essence of the times, Kissinger concedes a great deal to them.

For one thing, he concedes the force of their critique: these targets of his ire, after all, were merely private citizens whose efforts to shape policy were confined to the opinion columns of newspapers and magazines, something one might find it difficult to remember in light of the many pages Kissinger devotes to refuting their ideas and complaining about their influence. Then, too, his final appraisal of his neoconservative adversaries is remarkably generous: they made, he notes, "significant contributions to American thinking on foreign policy," especially in bringing "a much needed intellectual rigor and energy to the debate, which helped to overcome the dominance of the liberal conventional wisdom."

Most importantly, however, Kissinger implicitly admits the justice of a key element of the neoconservative case when he suggests that the rhetoric in which the Nixon and Ford administrations couched their policies was flawed. This flaw, indeed, would not be remedied until the advent of Ronald Reagan, who "proved to have a better instinct for America's emotions by justifying his course in the name of American idealism." Even as the Reagan administration (Kissinger writes) continued quietly to follow some of the détente-inspired policies set by Nixon and Ford—adhering, for example, to the limits imposed by the strategic-arms agreements, forging closer ties with Communist China at the expense of Taiwan—Reagan himself

> made sure that his policy declarations resonated with what was, in effect, classic Wilsonianism based on democratic virtue. As a result, he won broader support for the defense budget and geopolitical reengagement than Nixon was able to achieve or could have achieved in his time.

How to assess this last claim? By ringing the bell of freedom, Reagan unquestionably did sway the public in a way that neither of his Republican predecessors in the 1970's ever learned to do. And, as Kissinger is quick to point out, the Great Communicator also enjoyed certain other advantages over Nixon and Ford: by 1980, Vietnam and Watergate had receded into the background, and four years of unpleasant surprises under the profoundly inept Jimmy Carter had created a groundswell of support for a more demonstrative American posture.

Nevertheless, the undermining of détente is traceable to far more than what Kissinger suggests was a mere rhetoric deficit. The real problem, visible throughout the entire duration of the policy, was rooted not, as Kissinger would have it, in inadequate oratory or in any other insufficiency in Nixon and Ford's political temperament or skills but in the essence of the strategy itself. This was illuminated most strikingly in 1974 when Ford provoked an uproar by declining to receive the Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in the White House. Though only a minor skirmish in the long domestic battle over Soviet-American relations, the episode disclosed a fundamental contradiction of détente.

In *Years of Renewal*, Kissinger offers an entirely plausible and even a persuasive explanation of how and why the decision not to receive Solzhenitsyn was made. He asserts that if he could do things over again, he would have attempted to arrange a "low-key" meeting with Ford. But the striking fact remains that, in pursuing the policy of détente, the United States had maneuvered itself into a corner from which it *could not* openly or enthusiastically hail a man like Solzhenitsyn, whose spoken and written truths struck fear in the mind of our country's most implacable adversary. The reason for this was that our government, out of the weaknesses Kissinger himself describes, was treating that adversary as a confrère whose hideous character flaws could not be discussed.

As Kissinger's memoirs make utterly clear, there is no easy way to untangle this knot. Given the circumstances the United States faced in those years, a forthright ideological assault of the sort Ronald Reagan launched when he called the USSR "the focus of evil in the modern world" might well have generated risks that the country was far from prepared to run. Ford, argues Kissinger, simply could not

> announce a crusade against a nuclear superpower two months after the collapse of Indochina, in the midst of a delicate negotiation in the still-explosive Middle East, and while Angola was erupting, investigations were paralyzing our intelligence services, and Congress was urging reduction of our forces overseas and legislating a military embargo against Turkey, an indispensable NATO ally.

There is a high quotient of logic in

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this position. But there is an equally high quotient on the other side. The Soviet Union, after all, never for a moment ceased to wage ideological warfare against the American "imperialists"; by failing to answer this warfare with our most formidable weapon—the truth—we were, along with everything else, practicing a form of unilateral disarmament in the political sphere.

More than anything else, this was the sum and substance of the neoconservative critique of détente. There were truths about the Soviet Union, and about the United States, that desperately needed to be told if there were to be any chance of curing our country of its weaknesses or putting into practice a morally honest and aggressive stance. In this sense, neoconservatism unquestionably paved the way for the more robust American policy—a policy of deeds, not merely of "rhetoric"—that followed in the 1980's and that contributed mightily to genuinely transcending the cold war by winning it.

Needless to say, Kissinger applauds that policy, finally put into place by Ronald Reagan four years after he himself had left office. Indeed, he claims to have prepared the ground for it. In this, finally, even a critic of his policies has to acknowledge that he is in a basic sense right. Under his stewardship, the country survived a perilous period to fight another day. American foreign policy may have been a shambles when Ford left office in 1976, and things were to get even worse under Carter over the next four years, but in recalling the frightening downward spiral of the 1970's one cannot simply point a finger of blame at Henry Kissinger, an astonishingly brilliant and agile American diplomat who, whatever his misconceptions and mistakes along the way, engaged in a desperate struggle to right the ship of state as it was foundering upon the rocks.

In reconstructing his own very large part in this long saga in a spirit of both critical and self-critical inquiry, and in extensive and endlessly fascinating detail, he has given us in this volume, as in the previous two, the benefit of his undeniable lucidity and wisdom as well as one of the most majestically intelligent books about statecraft to have been written in this century.

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MUSIC

Masterpieces of the Century: Part 2

Terry Teachout

THE CENTRAL event in the history of classical music since World War II is the collapse of serialism and of the modernist avant-garde. That collapse is now forcing a wholesale revision of the conventional wisdom regarding the course of Western music in our century—and not a moment too soon. As I wrote in these pages last month ("Musical Masterpieces of the Century: A Critical Guide"), it was generally believed by critics and scholars as little as 25 years ago that tonality was dead or dying; today, it is no less generally acknowledged that tonality is as essential to the intelligibility of music as grammar is essential to the intelligibility of language.

As a result of this sea change, the story of the modern movement in music is currently in the process of being rewritten. The retrospective significance of composers like Arnold Schoenberg, the inventor of serialism, has been sharply diminished by the breakup of the avant-garde monopoly, while the great tonal modernists—Stravinsky, Bartók, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Hindemith, Copland—now appear more important than ever.

It follows that the canon of musical modernism must be similarly rewritten. As a step toward this end, I have compiled a list of 50 major works written since 1900 by 29 major composers, the first installment of which appeared last month. But the purpose of this "counter-canon" is not merely to give tonalism its due; it is also to clarify the meaning of musical greatness in the modern era. I chose the works on the list not because they are historically "significant" but because I believe them to be masterpieces of permanent interest. Taken together, they comprise a representative cross-section of music by the greatest classical composers of the 20th century—not all of whom are presently recognized as such.

This second installment runs from the end of World War I to the end of World War II, the period when the mainstream of classical music came to be occupied by tonal modernists based not in Germany and Austria but in France, Russia, England, and (increasingly) the United States. As before, I recommend stereo recordings of these works currently available on CD; when appropriate, I also list "creator recordings" by artists responsible for a piece's premiere, as well as recordings made by the composers themselves.

Last month's installment took us from 1900 to 1917 and up to number 15 on my list of 50 masterpieces. Herewith the next 25 compositions:

1919

16. Sir Edward Elgar
Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85

The havoc wrought by World War I is reflected in many of the key musical works composed in the decade following its end. Sir Edward Elgar, whose music was seen by many as a symbol of the "Kiplingesque" self-confidence of Edwardian England, was so traumatized by the postwar decline in morale that he stopped composing; his last large-scale work, the E-Minor Cello Concerto, is a darkly eloquent elegy for a world stripped bare of moral certitude.

The best stereo recording of the E-Minor Concerto, Paul Tortelier's 1972 version with Sir Adrian Boult

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and the London Philharmonic, is out of print, but Pablo Casals's powerful 1945 rendition with Boult and the BBC Symphony, originally issued on 78's, is now available on CD in an excellent transfer by Ward Marston (Biddulph LAB 144).

1921
17. Alban Berg
Wozzeck

The composer of *Wozzeck* turned the twisted harmonic language of his teacher, Arnold Schoenberg, into a cry of anguish at the loss of faith implicit in what he believed to be the permanent disintegration of tonality. Universally acknowledged as one of the 20th century's two or three greatest operas, *Wozzeck* is a horrifying tale of sexual corruption, as well as an unintended demonstration of the expressive insufficiency of atonality: at the opera's wrenching climax, Berg returns unambiguously to the key of D minor.

Christoph von Dohnányi's passionate yet refined interpretation, featuring Eberhard Wächter in the title role, is of special interest for the frankly romantic playing of the Vienna Philharmonic, which emphasizes the link between Berg's expressionism and 19th-century German operatic tradition (London 417 348-2, two CD's).

1925
18. Leoš Janáček
The Makropulos Case

Janáček's self-made modernism, a delightfully eccentric amalgam of prickly harmonies, crisp orchestral sonorities, and a melodic vocabulary based on Czech speech rhythms, has a tart flavor all its own. His operas have yet to win a broad-based audience, but they are greatly admired by connoisseurs, especially *The Makropulos Case*, the bizarre yet strangely moving tale of a world-famous singer who possesses the secret of eternal life.

The Makropulos Case ranks high among Sir Charles Mackerras's Janáček recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic, not least because of Elisabeth Soderstrom's penetrating interpretation of the complex role of Emilia Marty (London 430 372-2, two CD's).

1926
19. Leoš Janáček
Glagolitic Mass

Outside of his operas, Janáček's finest composition is the Glagolitic Mass, a setting for soloists, chorus, and orchestra of the Roman Catholic mass (translated into Old Slavonic) that is one of the most spectacular pieces of religious music composed in this century. It was intended, Janáček said,

> to show my people how to talk to God. The cathedral stretches to the vaults of Heaven; its candles are tall pine trees with stars at their tops. . . . I am making thunder and lightning, and nightingales, thrushes, ducklings, and geese make music with me.

Michael Tilson Thomas's recording with the London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra is highly effective, and has the further advantage of being coupled with an equally good performance of the Sinfonietta (1926), Janáček's most successful symphonic work (Sony SK 47182).

1928
20. Igor Stravinsky
Apollo

By the end of the 20's, the explosive forces unleashed by the rise of musical modernism had led to a conservative countermovement, the "neoclassicism" of Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, and their youthful followers. Deliberately basing their works on musical styles of the past, the neoclassicists sought to bring a greater measure of order and stability to modernism—reaffirming in the process their commitment to the traditional language of tonality.

Stravinsky's *Apollo*, mellifluously scored for strings alone, was composed for the Ballets Russes (and choreographed by George Balanchine, whose neoclassical ballets continue to introduce new listeners to Stravinsky's music). Its wholehearted embrace of melody astonished audiences that had grown accustomed to the barbarities of *The Rite of Spring*—which appears as number 11 on my chronological list in the April COMMENTARY—and the choral ballet *Les Noces*. But the composer saw *Apollo* as a natural extension of his quest for musical self-discipline. "The clear integration of a work of art and its crystallization," he later wrote in *Poetics of Music*,

> demand that all the Dionysian elements, which stimulate a composer and set in motion the rising sap of his imagination, be adequately controlled before we succumb to their fever, and ultimately, subordinated to discipline: such is Apollo's command.

Stravinsky's own 1950 recording of *Apollo* has never been transferred to CD, while his 1964 version is currently available only in a boxed set of his complete stereo recordings. Herbert von Karajan's gorgeous performance with the strings of the Berlin Philharmonic is coupled on CD with his second recording of *The Rite of Spring*, recommended last month (DGG 415 979-2).

1930
21. Igor Stravinsky
Symphony of Psalms

Commissioned in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Symphony of Psalms is a three-part setting for chorus and orchestra (with no violins or violas and no vocal soloists) of excerpts from Psalms 38 and 39 and the whole of Psalm 150. Composed, Stravinsky claimed, in "a state of religious and musical ebullience," the Symphony of Psalms is as magnificently austere as Janáček's Glagolitic Mass is extroverted. No work, not even *Apollo*, is more closely identified with the neoclassical ideal.

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Stravinsky recorded the Symphony of Psalms twice. The second version, with the Toronto Festival Singers and the CBC Symphony, is coupled on CD with his Symphony in C (1940) and Symphony in Three Movements (1946), affording a striking demonstration of how he used his neoclassical style to freshen the symphonic tradition (Sony MK 42434).

1931

22. Maurice Ravel
Piano Concerto in G

Ravel admired George Gershwin and adored American jazz, and both interests are reflected in his last large-scale work, a high-spirited *divertissement* for piano and orchestra in which homage is discreetly paid to Gershwin's Concerto in F. The outer movements combine sparkling piano writing with a touch of the blues, while the slow movement (modeled, Ravel confessed, after Mozart's A-Major Clarinet Quintet) consists of an exquisitely balanced, seemingly endless melody that floats on a luminous cloud of orchestral color.

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's 1957 performance with Ettore Gracis and the Philharmonia Orchestra is included in the *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* series on Philips records, along with an amazingly precise 1959 BBC broadcast of *Gaspard de la nuit*, Ravel's largest and most technically demanding work for solo piano (Philips 456 901-2, two CD's).

1933

23. Kurt Weill
The Seven Deadly Sins

Many other European composers besides Ravel were influenced by jazz, and one of them, Kurt Weill, went so far as to emigrate to the United States and write musical comedies for Broadway. The best-known product of his fascination with American popular music was *The Three-Penny Opera* (1928), created in collaboration with the poet-playwright Bertolt Brecht; but an even stronger work in the same vein is *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Composed for George Balanchine's short-lived *Les Ballets 1933*, this ballet-cantata for soprano, male vocal quartet, and orchestra (plus banjo) is a sardonic tale of lust and greed under capitalism. Brecht's hard-Left politics are now badly dated, but Weill's score has lost none of its savor.

Angelina Réaux's live recording of *The Seven Deadly Sins* with Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic is pungently idiomatic (Teldec 95029-2).

1934

24. Béla Bartók
String Quartet No. 5

After Stravinsky, the 20th century's foremost composer was Béla Bartók, whose music underwent a similar transformation as he grew older: the harsh idiom of his middle period gradually gave way to a more lyrical style firmly rooted in tonal tradition. The violent dissonances of the Fourth Quartet, for instance, are "resolved" in the Fifth Quartet, a marvel of musical architecture whose five movements are arranged in the composer's preferred "arch" form. The Fifth Quartet is no easy nut to crack, but for all the spikiness of its harmonic language, the listener is never in doubt of Bartók's fundamental acceptance of the natural law of tonality, proclaimed in the unison B flats of the very first bar.

The Emerson String Quartet's two-disc set of the six Bartók quartets is bold, brilliant, and as close to definitive as can be imagined (DGG 423 657-2, two CD's).

25. Paul Hindemith
Symphony, "Mathis der Maler"

Paul Hindemith, the outstanding German composer of the 20th century, sought to revive the Austro-German tradition by de-Wagnerizing it. After an initial flirtation with expressionism, Hindemith embraced neoclassicism, both as a composer and as a theorist: developing a theoretical explanation for the natural basis of traditional tonality, he then reworked his own compositional style to make it more consistent with the theory. In the *Mathis* Symphony, a free-standing orchestral piece drawn from his opera about the 16th-century German painter Matthias Grunewald, this new style—soberly colored and rhythmically foursquare, yet warmed by a lyricism that at times approaches the visionary—emerges with impressive clarity.

The best modern version of the *Mathis* Symphony is by Herbert Blomstedt and the San Francisco Symphony (London 421 523-2). Hindemith conducted the Berlin Philharmonic in a straightforward performance recorded within weeks of the 1934 premiere, shortly before Nazi Germany's government-controlled press began to attack his music as excessively modernistic, a controversy that ultimately led to his emigration to the United States (Koch Schwann SCH 311342).

26. Sergei Rachmaninoff
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

One unintended consequence of the death of the avant-garde has been an increased willingness on the part of Western critics to view Sergei Rachmaninoff as a composer of stature. Though his Second and Third Piano Concertos are as romantic as anything by Brahms or Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, like Puccini, was touched by the cross-currents of modernity, and the best of the scores he composed after leaving the Soviet Union in 1917 can hold their own with anything written in the 30's and 40's. The Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, is unmistakably modern in tone—the solo part crackles with mordant wit—yet audiences embraced it at once, and it continues to be among the most popular

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showpieces of the piano literature.

Though the Rhapsody has been recorded by nearly every major pianist to come to prominence in the past half-century, the composer's own interpretation, accompanied by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, remains nonpareil (RCA 61658-2, two CD's).

1935

27. Alban Berg
Violin Concerto

Arnold Schoenberg's discovery of the systematic method of atonal harmonic organization known as serialism left him certain (in his own oft-quoted words) that he had "guaranteed the supremacy of German music for the next 100 years." The phrase rings with unintended irony, not only in light of the devastation that the leader of the "thousand-year Reich" was about to bring to Europe but because, in music, the ultimate effect of Schoenberg's invention was to put an *end* to the dominance of the Austro-German tradition.

Alban Berg (see above, number 17) was the only composer to write serial music that has entered the standard repertoire. His Violin Concerto is built on a twelve-tone row—the essence of the serial method—but the row is constructed of interlocking major and minor thirds, an intervallic structure that allows him to generate quasi-tonal effects (he even quotes a Bach chorale in the second movement). Fortunately, it is not necessary to understand the complexities of Berg's compositional technique in order to appreciate the intensely nostalgic Violin Concerto, a lone masterpiece of serialism that will stand as a monument to the perversity of Schoenberg's fantasies.

Among the best modern performances of the Berg Violin Concerto is Itzhak Perlman's handsomely played version with Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony, usefully coupled with the Stravinsky Violin Concerto (DGG 447 445-2).

28. George Gershwin
Porgy and Bess

America's best-known songwriter doubled as the composer of a series of "classical" works into which he wove jazz, blues, and popular song with steadily increasing skill and sensitivity. *Porgy and Bess*, the most ambitious of Gershwin's large-scale compositions, is a full-length opera whose occasional moments of technical naiveté do nothing to obscure its vitality and sweep; no American opera has reached a wider audience, and none is more memorable.

The best complete recording of *Porgy and Bess* is by Sir Simon Rattle, the London Philharmonic, and the cast and chorus of the 1988 Glyndebourne Festival production (EMI CDCC 56220, three CD's).

29. Sir William Walton
Symphony No. 1 in B Flat Minor

A romantic in modernist's clothing, Sir William Walton dominated British music throughout the 1930's, turning out a half-dozen fastidiously crafted scores in which a disparate collection of unlikely influences—American jazz and popular song, the conservative modernism of Sibelius and Prokofiev, even the richly upholstered processional style of Elgar's "official" music—are blended into a style that is as English as Westminster Abbey. The First Symphony runs the expressive gamut from nervous uncertainty to outright anger and despair (the scherzo is marked "*Presto, con malizia*"), ending with an all-flags-flying virtuoso finale whose vibrant optimism fails to quell the doubts sown in the first three movements.

Just four weeks after giving the work's world premiere, Sir Hamilton Harty and the London Symphony made a staggering studio recording of it for Decca. Despite fuzzy sound and brief flurries of awkward orchestral playing, this remarkable performance is one of the most compelling creator recordings of a 20th-century masterpiece to be made in the 78-rpm era (Dutton Laboratories CDAX8003). The best modern recording, André Previn's 1966 version with the London Symphony, is currently unavailable in the U.S.

1936

30. Béla Bartók
Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta

Every facet of Bartók's mature style—the unsentimental yet vibrantly emotional themes, the brusque cross-rhythms, the omnipresent flavor of Hungarian folk music—can be heard in *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, in which the composer's journey from dissonance to consonance is dramatized. The first movement is a highly chromatic fugue reminiscent of late Beethoven; in the folk-flavored finale, Bartók expands the tightly spaced intervals of the opening fugal subject into a radiantly diatonic apotheosis.

No conductor understood Bartók's music better than his fellow Hungarian Fritz Reiner, whose incisive 1958 recording with the Chicago Symphony of *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* has been digitally remastered and reissued on CD together with an equally convincing performance of the 1943 Concerto for Orchestra, the masterpiece of Bartók's American years (RCA 09026-61504-2).

31. Sergei Prokofiev
Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64

In 1936, Prokofiev (whose Violin Concerto No. 1 in D, Op. 19, is listed at number 15 in last month's COMMENTARY) returned to the Soviet Union, hoping to find there a measure of the personal and professional stability that had eluded him during his years of wandering. Instead, the composer was thrust into the middle of a politico-aesthetic battle in which he and his younger colleague Dmitri Shostakovich would be cruelly used as pawns.

In the short run, however, Pro-

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kofiev's repatriation released creative impulses that had previously been blocked, and brought about the emergence of the explicitly neoromantic style heard in *Romeo and Juliet*, the most popular full-evening ballet composed in this century. In this superbly dramatic score, Prokofiev reveals an uncanny sensitivity to character and mood for which the term "Shakespearean" is perfectly appropriate. He would compose other major works during the last two decades of his life—the Seventh Piano Sonata and Fifth Symphony in particular—but *Romeo and Juliet* is the signal achievement of his later years.

Valery Gergiev and the Kirov Orchestra have made a sumptuous studio recording of *Romeo and Juliet* that bristles with the immediacy of a live performance in the theater (Philips 432 166-2, two CD's).

1937

32. Francis Poulenc
Tel jour, telle nuit

Long dismissed as a lightweight *pasticheur*, Francis Poulenc was actually the greatest French composer of the post-impressionist era. Strongly influenced by Stravinsky, he nevertheless managed to remain a wholly individual stylist, nowhere more so than in his art songs. Though little-known among English-speaking listeners, *Tel jour, telle nuit*, a noble, deeply felt cycle of love songs based on the poetry of Paul Eluard, ranks with the finest work of Debussy, Mahler, Benjamin Britten, and Samuel Barber, the other important songwriters of tonal modernism.

Most of Poulenc's songs were written for the French baritone Pierre Bernac, whose acute musicality, miraculously clear diction, and idiosyncratic, strongly colored vocal timbre can be heard in the performance of *Tel jour, telle nuit* he recorded in 1946 with the composer at the piano, currently available as part of *The Essential Pierre Bernac* (Testament SBT 3161, three CD's).

33. Dmitri Shostakovich
Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, Op. 47

A musical *enfant terrible* in the early years of Soviet rule, Dmitri Shostakovich soon ran afoul of the coarse philistinism of Stalin's cultural commissars. His "response" was the Fifth Symphony, an exercise in neoromanticism that purported to embody the tenets of "socialist realism" (one journalist-toady dubbed it "a Soviet artist's reply to just criticism"). In fact, this was the first of Shostakovich's compositions to carry a double meaning. Russian audiences understood it to be a coded protest against the horrors of Stalinism; Western listeners who knew nothing of the work's political context saw it as the first great post-Mahlerian symphony. The Fifth Symphony immediately entered the international concert repertoire, remaining deservedly popular ever since.

By far the best recording of the Fifth Symphony is Leonard Bernstein's galvanizing 1959 performance with the New York Philharmonic, taped in Boston's Symphony Hall shortly after the orchestra returned from its first tour of the Soviet Union (Sony SMK 47615).

1938

34. Béla Bartók
Violin Concerto No. 2

Of the half-dozen masterpieces of Bartók's last years, perhaps the most immediately accessible is the Second Violin Concerto, a tightly argued large-scale musical structure that doubles as a formidable showpiece for a world-class violinist, full of cunningly calculated virtuoso effects. The Second Concerto sweeps the listener in a single arc of momentum all the way from the soaring, gypsy-like opening theme to the thrilling climax of the finale.

Gil Shaham, the finest American violinist of his generation, has just released a fiery yet warmly expressive performance of the Second Concerto, lucidly accompanied by Pierre Boulez and the Chicago Symphony (DGG 459 639-2).

1940

35. Paul Hindemith
The Four Temperaments

The poise and balance of Paul Hindemith's post-*Mathis* music are exemplified by *The Four Temperaments*, a concerto-like theme and variations for piano and string orchestra originally commissioned by George Balanchine (who later used it as the score for his greatest ballet). Here, Hindemith's carefully worked-out theoretical concepts are enlivened by inspiration, and the result is a wonderfully varied piece with none of the academic dryness of the composer's lesser efforts. The thematic material is memorably lyrical, the harmonic language rich and full.

The best modern recording is by Howard Shelley, Yan-Pascal Tortelier, and the strings of the BBC Philharmonic (Chandos CHAN 9124). Also of interest is a videocassette of *The Four Temperaments* from a 1976 New York City Ballet telecast (Nonesuch 40177-3).

1941

36. Aaron Copland
Piano Sonata

America's greatest composer started out as a hard-edged modernist, but his style soon became far more accessible. Even a challenging piece like the Piano Sonata is recognizably related to such popular ballet scores of the 40's as *Appalachian Spring*—particularly the extended coda to the finale, in which the dynamism of the first two movements winds slowly down to perfect stillness. The American pianist William Kapell was right in telling the composer that "this towering work is the one truly great piano composition to come from our country."

Kapell's untimely death robbed us of a commercial recording by him of the Copland Piano Sonata,

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but an off-the-air tape of a 1953 recital, recently discovered and issued by RCA, reveals that his interpretation was an extraordinary one, seething with passion and force (RCA 09026-68997-2). Of comparable interest is Leonard Bernstein's strong, sympathetic 1947 studio recording (RCA 09026-60915-2).

1942

37. Sergei Prokofiev
Piano Sonata No. 7 in B Flat, Op. 83

The Seventh Sonata, the second of three "war sonatas" composed by Prokofiev at the height of World War II, epitomizes his percussive keyboard style, the most influential contribution to 20th-century piano technique after Debussy and Ravel. But it is also an emotionally gripping piece reflective of the highly charged anxieties of life in wartime—as well as the omnipresent fear of life under Stalin.

Maurizio Pollini's mercurial 1971 performance is one of the most stupendous displays of virtuosity ever to be captured by the microphone (DGG 419 202-2). Sviatoslav Richter's creator recording, now available in Philips' *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* series, is less volatile—and less explicitly virtuosic—but fully as compelling (Philips 456 946-2, two CD's).

1943

38. Benjamin Britten
Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings, Op. 31

Benjamin Britten was a revolutionary conservative: throughout his career, he found striking new ways to recast the simplest of harmonic ideas, and his use of traditional tonality was as consistently fresh as that of Stravinsky or Bartók. Most of his music is for the human voice—he wrote more stageworthy operas than any other 20th-century composer—and the Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings, a collection of English poems about nighttime that was tailor-made for the uniquely personal singing of Peter Pears and the virtuoso horn playing of Dennis Brain, is probably the best of his works for solo voice.

Pears, Brain, and Britten recorded the Serenade in 1944, and this vivid performance is coupled on CD with a youthfully ardent 1942 recording by Pears and Britten of *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, Op. 22, among the century's finest piano-accompanied song cycles (Pearl GEMM CD 9177).

39. Ralph Vaughan Williams
Symphony No. 5 in D

Ralph Vaughan Williams's now-unfashionable music stands in urgent need of revaluation. From 1920 to 1945, he was England's most admired composer; thereafter, younger critics and composers began to dismiss his style as stodgy and technically unsure. In fact, Vaughan Williams was one of the century's greatest symphonists, and his Fifth Symphony, dedicated to Sibelius and loosely based on his own operatic version of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, is a spacious, rapturously lyrical meditation that sums up much of what was best in English music between Elgar and Benjamin Britten.

Several well-known conductors, including Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, and André Previn, have made excellent recordings of the Fifth Symphony, but the version by Vernon Handley and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is especially fine (Classics for Pleasure CDEMX 9512).

1944

40. Aaron Copland
Appalachian Spring

Aaron Copland's ballet scores define the American style in modern music. Their springy dance rhythms, widely spaced harmonies, and long arches of melody have been imitated by countless successors and continue to win the hearts of audiences the world over. *Appalachian Spring*, composed for Martha Graham, represents a synthesis of the abstract modernism of Copland's youth with the unabashed populism of *Billy the Kid* (1940) and *Rodeo* (1942). Composed toward the end of World War II, *Appalachian Spring* glows with a quiet optimism that gives no inkling of the chaos that would spread throughout the world of classical music as the 40's gave way to the 50's. It is Copland's finest work, and very likely the greatest piece of music yet written by an American composer.

An inconsistent but occasionally inspired conductor who grew less reliable as his memory began to fail, Copland was in peak form for the recording of the original chamber version of *Appalachian Spring* with a crack team of thirteen New York studio musicians (Sony MK 42431). The best recording of the abridged suite for full orchestra is Leonard Bernstein's performance with the New York Philharmonic, coupled with the suites from *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo* (Sony SMK 47543).

To be continued

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Books in Review

Beyond Galileo

Rocks of Ages:
Science and Religion in the
Fullness of Life
by Stephen Jay Gould
Ballantine. 240 pp. $18.95

Reviewed by
George Weigel

STEPHEN JAY GOULD, the Harvard/NYU paleontologist whose formidable skills as a popularizer have made him one of the world's most successful science writers, now deploys those same skills in discussing for nonspecialist readers the future relationship between scientists and religious believers. His aim is to resolve what he aptly terms "the supposed conflict between science and religion."

However fevered its history, the quarrel between science and religion, is, Gould argues, "a debate that exists only in people's minds and social practices, not in the logic or proper utility of these . . . equally vital subjects." The conflict, in short, is an artificial one, sustained by ignorance and bias in both camps. Resolving it involves recognizing its artificiality—something that, Gould boldly suggests, both Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley, the 19th-century English biologist and advocate of scientifically-grounded agnosticism, were prepared to do.

Gould's proposal is that both science and religion adopt a principle of "respectful noninterference" between their "nonoverlapping magisteria," or "NOMA" (his acronym). With such a principle in place, he claims, the putative problem simply dissolves. Scientists will talk about "the factual character of the natural world," and religious people will talk about *their* distinctive realm. Life will go on without rancor.

Peace-through-NOMA is suggested at the very outset of this brief book. Gould then attempts to explain and defend his principle of "noninterference" through a historical ramble in which he revisits Darwin's and Huxley's personal struggles with the deaths of their children, Galileo's 17th-century battle with the Church, the Vatican statements on evolution by Popes Pius XII and John Paul II, the biologist J.B.S. Haldane's 1927 Gifford lectures on science and religion, and contemporary American court battles over high-school biology textbooks.

At the end, NOMA reappears as the centerpiece of a more comprehensive concept of the human condition. We must, Gould writes, "establish our own paths in this most diverse and interesting of conceivable universes"—a universe whose indifference to human striving, suffering, and glory is, he insists, the precondition for human freedom.

ONE CAN readily agree with Gould that the alleged conflict between religion and science, symbolically represented by the Galileo affair and the 1925 Scopes "Monkey Trial" in Tennessee over the teaching of evolution in the public schools, reflected misunderstandings of religious authority that need not impede a serious encounter today.

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(One might add, though Gould does not, that both these episodes also involved misunderstandings of the degree of certitude available to science, a subject to which I shall return.) A new conversation between science and religion, neither of which is going away and both of which will have a profound impact on the 21st century, would surely benefit all concerned.

But, on the terms that Gould suggests, a serious conversation is most unlikely. For as he conceives it, NOMA amounts to rather more than setting the rules of engagement between two teaching authorities. Gould's NOMA comes with an intellectual price tag—namely, the admission that religion and science are two "utterly different" human enterprises, or, to use the cliché, apples and oranges.

Gould candidly admits that there is nothing original in his "blessedly simple" and "entirely conventional" NOMA principle, as indeed there is not. Like similar proposals, however, what it fails to grapple with is that apples and oranges are both fruit—which means that they have important things in common. The same must be said of science and religion, both of which aim to understand the truth of the human condition. To treat science and religion as "utterly different" is convenient for certain kinds of scientists (deeply skeptical about religion but "tolerant") and certain kinds of religious believers (tepid and/or intellectually insecure). But it does not help us think very seriously about either realm.

Gould's proposal unravels even as he explores the rationale for his NOMA principle. He himself is an agnostic, convinced that in matters religious, "open-minded skepticism [is] the only rational position because, truly, one cannot know." This seems, at first blush, a humane, even a generous, position. But on closer examination, Gould's skepticism, like Thomas Huxley's, is not open-minded at all, but rather sets strict boundaries on the sorts of reasonableness it is prepared to recognize. One result of his particular form of skepticism—a result lethal to any serious intellectual engagement between science and religion—is that faith is reduced to fideism: a will-to-believe that is the antithesis of rationality. The assumption that one's interlocutor is, in some deep sense, irrational is not the most promising ground on which to open a conversation.

There are other serious problems with Gould's understanding of religious conviction and religious believers. He claims, for instance, to have a "great respect for religion," and indeed an enduring fascination with it, because "organized religion has fostered, throughout Western history, both the most unspeakable horrors and the most heartrending examples of human goodness in the face of personal danger." Leaving aside the question of how "organized religion" fostered the Gulag Archipelago or Mao's even more massive slaughter, we are still left here with a narrowly instrumental view of religious belief and practice: religion is interesting because it motivates people to do things, for good or for ill. Or, as Gould also stipulates, religion deals with "the realm of human purposes, meanings, and values," a realm completely divorced from the realm of fact with which science wrestles. Alas, it is but a short step from here to the inference that, while science deals with the "real world," religion is about, well, something else—lifestyle, perhaps.

THAT BIBLICAL religion has made truth-claims about the origin, nature, and destiny of the created world simply does not count in Gould's NOMA universe. But if truth is truth and not simply a cultural construct (as Gould insists is the case with respect to scientific claims about natural phenomena), there must be a considerable, and considerably interesting, overlap between two modes of human inquiry committed to the same end. History amply demonstrates that life on that overlapping terrain can be bruising. But it need not be so if both parties maintain a certain modesty about their respective competencies.

At the opening of the modern scientific age, the Church made a serious error by failing to heed the advice of the great Counter-Reformation Jesuit theologian Robert Bellarmine. During the Galileo affair, Bellarmine argued that, faced with scientific proofs that seemed to contradict religious truths, it was better for believers "to say that we do not understand, rather than affirm that what has been demonstrated [scientifically] is false." The Church has since learned Bellarmine's lesson in epistemological humility. Gould's proposal—that religion cede the "real world," and indeed anything properly describable as "knowledge," to science—suggests that the shoe is now on the other foot, and that a dose of Bellarmine's caution is needed in the laboratories.

Gould's skepticism also distorts his view of intellectual history. Although you will not learn it from *Rocks of Ages*, biblical religion has done more for Western civilization than motivating men and women to noble (or reprehensible) behavior. It has, for example, helped make science possible. Absent a culture influenced by three biblical truth-claims—that the natural world is a "creation" (i.e., an ordered reality); that history is linear; and that human beings have a unique place in the created order—it is not easy to see how what we know as the scientific method could have emerged. The scientific method was not, after all, the product of cultures formed by the notions that Fate is in charge of things, or that humanity is a plaything of the gods, or that the natural world is an accident, or that history is cyclical. It was the product of an intellectual universe shaped in no small part by Genesis 1-3 and John 1.1-14.

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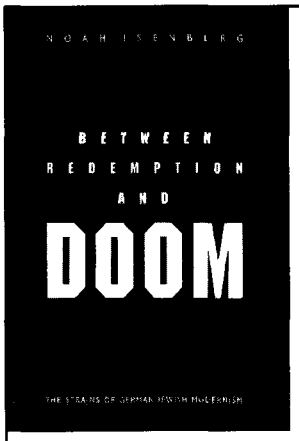
Although he strives to keep his rhetorical equilibrium throughout *Rocks of Ages*, the bile rises in Gould's throat when politics enters, stage left, and he reviews the recent battles over public-school curricula between defenders of evolutionary theory and advocates of "creation science." His narrative of one struggle in which he personally took the field against the unwashed fundamentalist rabble—a 1981 Arkansas textbook controversy that resulted in a major defeat for "creation science"—further defines the boundaries of Gould's tolerance, and suggests that, for him, respectful noninterference means conceding the entire public square to one account of humanity's origins and nature.

One need hardly hold a brief for "creation science," which muddles both creation and science, in order to notice that there is far more going on between today's "evolutionists" and "creationists" than a debate over the age of rocks—just as, in the Scopes "Monkey Trial," there was more going on between the contending attorneys Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan than a debate over the pedagogy of a teacher named John Scopes. However clumsily, advocates of "creation science" have rung a bell alerting the rest of us to the fact that, as taught in many elementary- and secondary-school science classes, evolutionary theory carries with it a lot of philosophical baggage. Many science texts today do not simply propose that an evolutionary mechanism explains certain aspects of the material world (which no thoughtful person would contest). Rather, their implicit claim is that the material world is all there is, period. And that, irony of ironies, sounds like an establishment of religion, or at least its functional equivalent.

Materialism is an idea with large consequences. Any all-purpose explanatory scheme for grasping things as they are implies an anthropology, a concept of the human person. Take, for example, Stephen Jay Gould himself, who tells us more about his metaphysics and his anthropology than he perhaps realizes when he writes, quoting the poet Robert Frost, that "Homo sapiens . . . ranks as a 'thing so small' in a vast universe, a wildly improbable evolutionary event, and not the nub of universal purpose." Gould finds this notion of accidental man "exhilarating" and "a source of . . . freedom and consequent moral responsibility," though he concedes that some may find it "depressing." But "depressing" hardly seems the *mot juste*. To think of human beings as congealed stardust, the accidental by-products of random biochemical processes, is to think of ourselves, in the final analysis, as meat. The history of this bloodiest of centuries is replete with examples of the devastation that follows upon such a—there is no other word for it—desecration of the human person.

There will indeed be a new conversation between science and religion in the 21st century. Developments in physics, astronomy, biochemistry, theology, and biblical studies are inexorably recasting the hoary either/or debates between scientific materialists and religious believers. And the new conversation will require more scientific literacy than many religious philosophers and theologians have managed to acquire in the past. But the fact is that, in recent decades, there has been far more intellectual openness on the religious side of this cultural divide than there has been among many scientists. If you are looking for the exhilaration of intellectual freedom these days, you are more likely to find it at the Vatican Observatory than in most university departments of paleontology. And if "fundamentalism" is the willful suspension of critical judgment because of prior meta-



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physical commitments, then one need go no farther for examples than today's legions of materialists and naturalists.

This materialistic fundamentalism is a severe obstacle to what Stephen Jay Gould states as his heartfelt goal: "a respectful, even loving *concordat* between . . . science and religion." Respect, much more love, would seem to require taking others for what they claim to be—in this instance, in touch with the truth. Biblical religion has long since granted that to science. It remains for science, at least as represented by *Rocks of Ages*, to reciprocate.

Testament

A Passion for Truth:
The Selected Writings of
Eric Breindel
edited by John Podhoretz
HarperCollins. 230 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Ruth R. Wisse

WHEN ERIC BREINDEL died suddenly in March 1998 at the age of forty-two, a whole sector of American culture seemed to grieve. At the packed funeral, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan eulogized his former student and aide by paraphrasing the Talmud: "Fools measure their lives in years, while wise people measure them in days. Eric was wise in this respect as he was in so many others." Mayor Rudolph Giuliani spoke glowingly about what Breindel had done for his native city of New York, and of his "strong, loving, courageous soul." Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., recalled his former Harvard classmate as "the smartest person [any of us] knew." Martin Peretz, editor of the *New Republic*, suggested that, as the child of Holocaust survivors, Breindel's passionate intensity about public issues was something unknown to "intellectuals on the sunny side of the street." Norman Podhoretz spoke eloquently of the manifold ways in which Breindel, whose first contribution to COMMENTARY appeared in 1977, had been "a very good Jew."

A graduate of Harvard Law School and the London School of Economics, Breindel served for ten years as the editorial-page editor of the *New York Post*, where he also wrote a weekly column, "Agendas." What did he say or do there, and elsewhere, to win the respect of so many distinguished mourners? A part of the answer is on view in this posthumous selection of his columns, lovingly edited and introduced by John Podhoretz, now associate editor of the *Post*.

What the book reveals is that Breindel became the Gary Cooper of journalists the old-fashioned way, by trying to protect those he loved. A child of privilege who was also very smart and attractive, Breindel could have become anything he wanted. This made it all the more impressive that he wanted to become the champion of his people—his people being New Yorkers, Americans, and Jews. Far from making him parochial or chauvinistic, Breindel's championship of those closest to home enlarged his sympathies, sharpened his understanding of international politics, and even gained him the trust of ideological adversaries.

DESPITE THE obviously dated quality of many of the events described in these pieces, the thrust of the arguments remains surprisingly fresh. "This column concerns the media—or, more precisely, a major media failure," one of them opens. "It's also about racism. And about silence on the part of public officials in the face of something they know to be wrong." There follows Breindel's searing indictment of the 1990 boycott of Korean-owned groceries in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, a boycott fueled by a self-styled black racist whom local authorities felt powerless to stop.

Ignoring none of the major culprits in the chain of complicity, Breindel singled out the New York media for all but ignoring the boycott, a sin of omission committed, he accurately noted, out of fear of offending blacks. But as he went on to show, this was to manifest prejudice twice over—against the Koreans, the victims of black racism, and against the majority of black people for assuming that they supported black racism. Upholding the long-range claims of justice against the day's political correctness, Breindel refused to countenance that the victimhood of one group could ever serve as an excuse for denying equal protection to another.

This was hardly the only occasion on which Breindel strove to expose the dangerous alliance in New York between violent offenders and their liberal apologists, people who think they can help the downtrodden by condoning their criminality, or who make excuses for evil because they are afraid to stand up to it. Responding to breaking events—the savage beating of a female jogger in Central Park, the Leonard Jeffries affair at City College, the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum in what he rightly called New York's first pogrom—Breindel unflinchingly explored the pernicious consequences of "white guilt" and the ways in which political activists "exploit the plight of unfortunate individuals in the service of larger ideological goals."

CONTINUING TO patrol his own beat, Breindel also focused with intensity on the crimes of Communism, and in particular on the ongoing efforts of American elites to obfuscate its historical record. This preoccupation must have seemed especially odd in someone of his age

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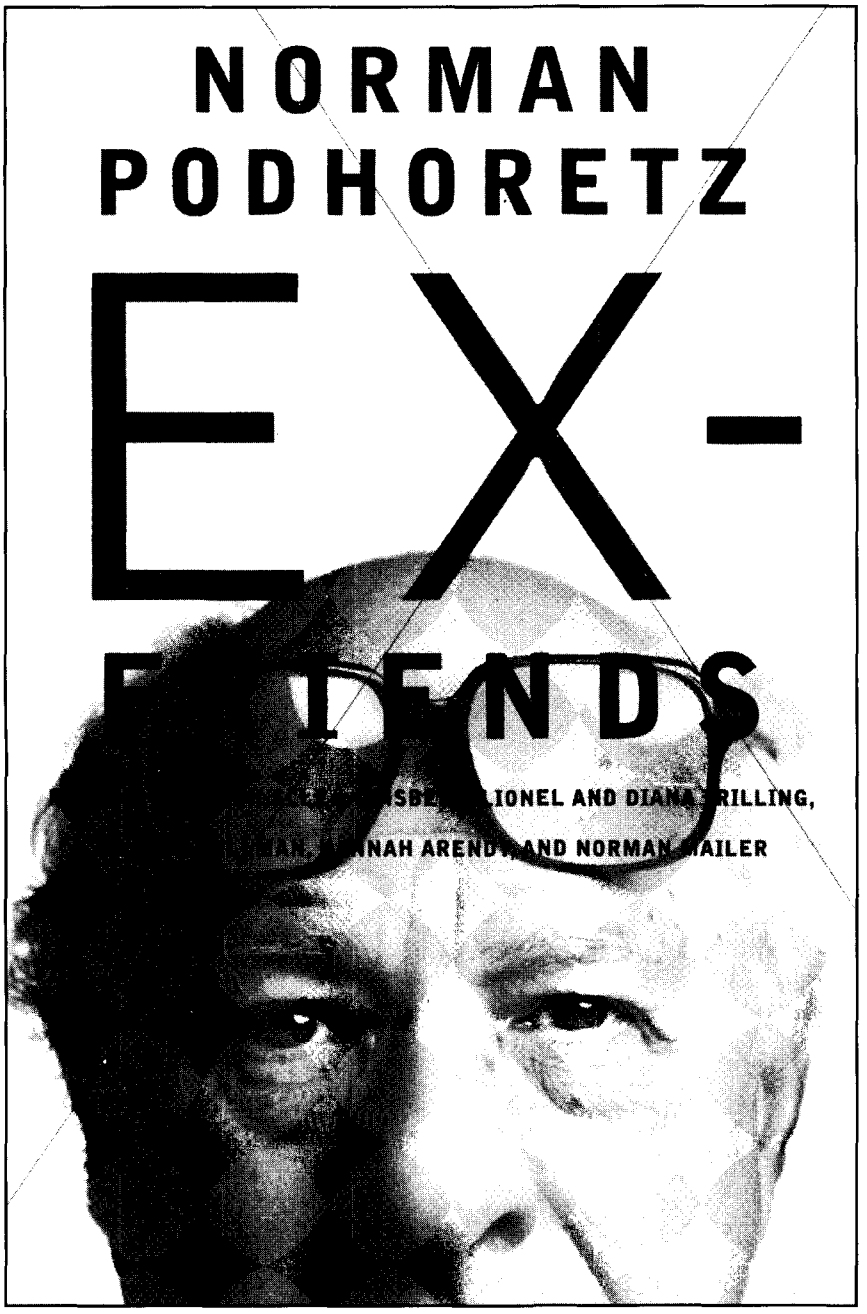

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and background, and yet it is perhaps here that he made his greatest and most original contribution, both as an American and as a Jew.

Most American liberals, while abundantly deploring the evils of Nazism, have tended to ignore the vexing question of the liberal (and, by extension, Jewish) attraction to socialism, including in its most repressive variety. Citing their interest in social justice, liberals have felt secure in their good intentions even as they themselves have been pulled leftward, countenancing radicalism on one side of the political spectrum while excoriating it on the other. Breindel, by contrast, recognized the connection between Auschwitz and the Gulag. For him, just as revulsion against the Ku Klux Klan required an opposition to racism when it manifested itself among blacks, so revulsion against Nazism required opposition to Communism. Otherwise, anyone could claim the right to impose his political will on others in the name of a "purifying" ideal.

Breindel did some of his best writing on this topic. In several columns about leftism in Hollywood, for example, he pointed out how, in the 1950's and later, former Communists used the excesses of McCarthyism as a cloak for their own unrepentant support of Soviet totalitarianism. "Why," he inquired, "haven't the movie-industry Communists ever been asked what they knew about the Soviet Union and when they knew it?" His description of how Hollywood rendered the actor Robert Taylor a "nonperson" for having testified in 1947 about the political struggle between Communists and anti-Communists in the Screen Actors Guild could serve almost verbatim as a capsule description of the campaign against Elia Kazan that continued right up to his recent belated Academy Award.

Finally, the Jews. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan pointed out in his eulogy, Breindel was one of the rare persons of his generation who even in his student days grasped the historical implications of the 1975 United Nations resolution branding Zionism as "a form of racism," a resolution issued with terrible irony on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, the 1938 event that inaugurated the Nazi war against the Jews. In his *Post* column, Breindel monitored with zealous rigor attacks directed at the Jewish people, whether mounted by Arabs against Israel, by black anti-Semites against their hasidic neighbors, or by liberals and others blaming the Jews themselves for the aggressions they suffered. Addressing the Clinton State Department in 1997, for example, he wondered why, in light of Yasir Arafat's flagrant violations of the Oslo peace accords, Washington should be devoting all its efforts to exerting pressure on Benjamin Netanyahu. His conclusion—that "Israel, presumably is an easier target"—was remarkably free of bitterness, just deadly accurate.

ON THE whole, Breindel addressed the practical aspects of politics, not their human motives. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a link among his areas of concern in the human tendency to self-deception. Opponents of racism choose to ignore the bigotry of those whom they have identified as victims of racism. Liberal sentimentalists camouflage crimes committed by Communists because they prefer not to face up to the evil consequences of egalitarian ideals. Arab aggression against Israel is denied, or deprecated, or blamed on the Jews, so that one need not confront the present and very palpable danger in which Israel finds itself.

Breindel's uncommon insight into the way people substitute wish for fact may have been born, at least in part, out of his own experience. Subject to health problems and chronic pain while still in college, he began to rely on heavy painkillers and then illegal drugs in the search for more effective relief. Eventually, an FBI arrest interrupted a budding career in government and sent him into treatment. The sobriety of Breindel's writing seems to derive from hard-won self-knowledge, particularly about the desire to escape into an artificially sweetened world. Having overcome that temptation in himself, he addressed it in others, urging them and us to cut no corners.

Eric Breindel was delicate in appearance, almost too beautiful for a man. The last time I saw him—on television, hosting a talk show—I was amused by the contrast between his northern drawl and the rat-a-tat style of others on the panel, and I wondered how long he would be able to maintain his thoughtful pace. I need not have. This book reminds us of the toughness behind his diffident bearing, the moral stamina behind the aura of fragility. He succumbed only to illness, never to weakness. The traditional phrase, may his memory be for a blessing, is fulfilled by this testament to his mind and heart.

Scare Tactics

Environmental Cancer:
A Political Disease
by S. Robert Lichter and
Stanley Rothman
Yale. 235 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

WITH EVERY passing decade, medical research makes it clearer that the incidence of cancer, the most dreaded of all diseases, can be influenced by substances in our surroundings. S. Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman—the former is president of the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington,

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D.C., the latter a political scientist at Smith College—do not take issue with this well-established finding. But they are concerned that the public has gotten a bum steer about the actual sources of such "environmental cancer."

Correctly understood, this term refers to cases of the disease that are clearly caused by things to which you might expose yourself or be exposed, from the butter you eat to the air you breathe. Yet, on this issue as on so many others, the modern environmentalist movement and its allies have seldom been interested in promoting a correct understanding. What they are much more interested in promoting, Lichter and Rothman show, is a particular view of the world; the actual findings of medical research on the dangers of environmental cancer are incidental to that view at best.

It is no mystery why the public is now so confused and fearful. Bombarded over the past three decades by media reports of upwardly spiraling cancer rates associated with this or that pollutant, food additive, pesticide, or industrial chemical—what Lichter and Rothman call "the cancer scare of the week"—Americans have every reason to believe that there is an "epidemic" out there of awful proportions. Lichter and Rothman have something to say about the relative truth of this idea, but to them the more interesting question is: *why* the blitz of bad news? To answer that question requires them to take a brief dip into the history of environmentalism.

As the authors see it, the traditional "conservationist" movement, long identified with Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, suddenly weakened in the early 1970's. This movement, which had largely created the country's national park system, took it for granted that the point of conservation was "anthropocentric"—i.e., to benefit human beings. But, propelled by late-1960's radicalism, and powerfully symbolized by Earth Day 1970, another ancient theme in environmental thinking suddenly gained momentum. This was the "ecocentric" perspective, derived from a romantic tradition in which nature itself has rights over and above those of humanity. For most "ecocentrists," the core problem of our times is modern, industrial, nature-destroying society, and the solution to the problem lies in activist politics and heavy regulation of the economy.

The radical views of this new breed of environmentalist are not confined to environmental questions. Lichter and Rothman have conducted a careful survey of senior staff members at the most prominent environmentalist organizations—including the Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace USA, the National Audubon Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Sierra Club. On issues ranging from patriotism (only 9 percent in the authors' survey endorsed the proposition "I would fight for my country, right or wrong," as opposed to 57 percent of the general public) to support of "preferential treatment" for minorities (70 percent of the environmentalists versus 34 percent of the public), environmental activists consistently come down on the adversarial side in the culture wars.

Their consistency, indeed, is something they share with the country's media elite—a subject that Lichter and Rothman have ably explored in the past. This heavy overlap of values helps to explain the powerful symbiosis that has developed between the two groups, and so does the obvious fact of their mutual self-interest. As the authors note, "Environmental organizations serve as enthusiastic sources of background information, provide

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colorful quotes or sound bites, and create breaking news that promotes social controversy, political conflict, and journalistic careers."

The real-world effect of these ties becomes clear in Lichter and Rothman's analysis of over 1,200 items on environmental subjects that appeared from 1972 to 1992 in the country's most influential news generators, from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to newsweeklies and the major television networks. In news and feature stories about the environment, the authors demonstrate, it is ceaselessly assumed that the activists are the good guys and that anyone standing in their way represents a selfish vested interest. At an environmentalist conference a decade ago, one senior editor at *Time* magazine, fresh from a special issue dopily declaring the earth to be "planet of the year," stated with evident pride: "We have crossed the boundary from news reporting into advocacy."

Lichter and Rothman usefully dissect one of the more spectacular examples of the harm done by this alliance—the nationwide panic about Alar, a pesticide used by apple growers, that was set off by a February 1989 broadcast of *60 Minutes*. Reporter Ed Bradley informed his 40 million viewers that Alar was "the most potent cancer-causing agent in our food supply," a claim based on the findings of the Natural Resources Defense Council. In the wake of the show, Alar was withdrawn from the American market, and apple sales collapsed. The fact that they have since recovered may be due in part to a California Department of Food and Agriculture study indicating that the probable risk from Alar was 3.5 cases of cancer per *trillion* persons in the population.

IF ALL of this is somewhat familiar ground, the book's big news is the extraordinary gap between the views of the activists surveyed by Lichter and Rothman and the views of a random sample of scientists working in the field of environmental cancer, all of them members of the highly esteemed American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). The two groups are amazingly at odds on every major point.

For openers, consider the notion—first introduced in a 1978 speech by Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary Joseph Califano—that modern industrial development means more and more carcinogens in the workplace, leading more or less inescapably to a cancer "epidemic." Less than a quarter of Lichter and Rothman's activists decline to endorse this proposition; it is rejected by over two-thirds of the AACR scientists.

As for the principal sources of cancer risk, the activists name tobacco, dioxin, asbestos, the pesticide ethyline dibromide, DDT, and assorted industrial pollutants. The AACR scientists agree only on tobacco and asbestos, and rate a high-fat diet as a more serious problem than the pesticides and industrial chemicals that so upset the activists. Indeed, Bruce Ames, a researcher cited often by Lichter and Rothman, points out that you can end up *increasing* cancer rates by barring the pesticides that make low-fiber, cancer-fighting foods available at lower prices. Likewise, the experts tend to see the long-run increase in cancer rates as influenced far less by man-made chemicals than by the aging of the population, older people being far more susceptible to the disease.

Finally, when it comes to reducing cancer rates, most of the AACR scientists believe that some level of carcinogens in the environment is inevitable, or at least not worth the effort of eliminating when cost is weighed against risk. By contrast, the activists incline to a rigid and absolutist position, holding that no level of carcinogens is acceptable. Close to 40 percent of them would reimpose the "Delaney clause," a federal regulation that banned substances causing *any* amount of animal cancer at *any* dosage level and that had been massively repudiated by the time it was repealed in 1996.

When Lichter and Rothman asked the activists in their survey to identify their religious affiliation, 47 percent of the group (versus 6 percent of the general public) said "none." But they were too quick to reply. Quite a few, it seems, might have answered "environmentalism."

Victims, Outlaws, Superstars

Rituals of Blood:
Consequences of Slavery in
Two American Centuries
by Orlando Patterson
Civitas-Counterpoint. 330 pp. $29.50

Reviewed by
Eric J. Sundquist

SOME YEARS ago, on the same university campus and within weeks of one another, I attended lectures on the black experience by Orlando Patterson and Frances Cress Welsing. Patterson, a professor at Harvard, was already known by then as a pathbreaking sociologist and historian, and his lecture drew upon the research for his monumental *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (1991), winner of the National Book Award. But only two dozen people, at most, were in the audience. By contrast, Welsing, a psychiatrist best known for her pseudo-Freudian conspiracy theories, drew a throng of several hundred eager to embrace her symbol-laden world view in which Nazi swastika = Christian cross = black man's genitals = castration/lynching = black holocaust.

ERIC J. SUNDQUIST *is dean of the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern University and the author of* To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature, *among other books.*

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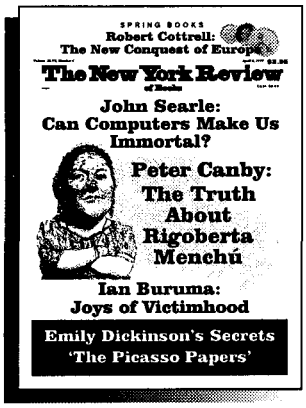

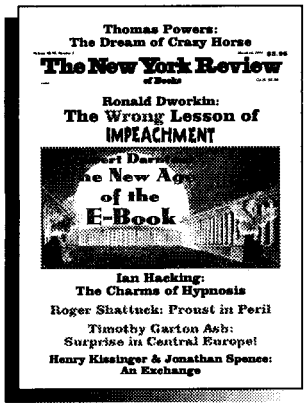

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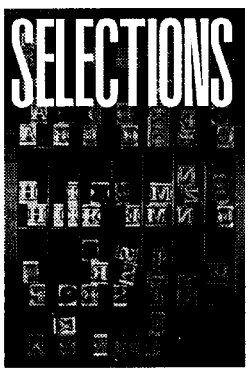

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The contrasting receptions afforded the ideas of Patterson and Welsing illustrate a variant of American anti-intellectualism, with serious scholarship overshadowed by crank therapies. Reading Patterson's newest book, however, one might suspect that he has taken a page from Welsing's weird anthropology of African-American life.

Rituals of Blood is a fascinating, disturbing, and ultimately maddening book. Arranged in a trio of unequal chapters and loosely centered on the theme of black manhood, it begins with a long quantitative analysis of the African-American family, moves to a historico-religious treatment of lynching, and concludes with a meditation on the present-day cult of black sports celebrities. Not only do the chapters get progressively shorter, but the quality of argument becomes more frenetic as the book unfolds.

HARKING BACK in his first chapter to arguments associated with Daniel Patrick Moynihan's ill-starred 1965 report on the black family, Patterson contends that slavery produced an "ethnocidal assault on gender roles, especially those of father and husband, leaving deep scars in the relations between Afro-American men and women." The extensive child labor of sharecropping, coupled with prohibitions against property rights and education, codified pathological patterns that still plague a large proportion of African-American families. Dissociated from the capacity to provide for offspring, the impulses of sexual manhood were, and remain, severed from the responsibilities of fatherhood.

Patterson's analysis of the black family runs strongly against the grain of revisionist theories—pioneered by Herbert Gutman and others—which maintain that slavery produced extended kinships, biological or not, that have paradoxically continued to provide African Americans with strong alternative "family" structures. Basing himself on a careful interpretation of data from two recent national surveys and a wealth of secondary literature, Patterson demonstrates that this theory, firmly entrenched in contemporary scholarship, is a utopian delusion in the case of slavery, and no less a delusion today.

Patterson is severe in documenting the roadblocks to black progress that can be ascribed to the continued irresponsibility of black men. *Rituals of Blood* points to a series of trends: dramatically reduced marriage prospects (whereas a Euro-American woman will spend 43 percent of her lifetime in a viable marriage, an African-American woman will spend only 22 percent); differential effects of early sexual experiences (an out-of-wedlock birth in a cohabiting relationship triples a white woman's chance of marriage, but a black woman's chances are unaffected); vastly higher rates of male infidelity (43 percent for black men versus 17 percent for white men); and so on.

When it comes to interpreting these patterns, Patterson rejects explanations based on contemporary racism, unemployment, or the staggering incarceration figures for young black men. Finding no evidence that male kinsmen and friends provide compensating role models for young blacks, he also ridicules the belief—the "myth of the 'hood," in his derisive phrase—that such networks can take the place of functioning families. Until African-American men reject "predatory attitudes toward women" and accept their responsibilities as fathers, he writes, black culture will remain locked in a cycle of despair, notwithstanding the increasing affluence of the black middle class and the gradual disappearance of racism from American life.

UP TO this point, *Rituals of Blood* reads like a somewhat heterodox sociological treatise. Patterson's ideas are not, to be sure, in the academic mainstream, but neither are they off the map (they seem to tilt toward neoconservatism). Suddenly, though, button-down scholarship gives way to provocation as Patterson takes a new tack. In his second chapter he contends that the nation's epidemic of lynchings of black men between the 1880's and the 1940's proves that Christianity is nothing less than a violent, 2,000-year betrayal of Jesus's teachings, a betrayal that reached its apex in the American South.

Patterson is hardly the only scholar to have dwelled on the "religion of the Lost Cause"—the nostalgic belief that the grandeur of the Confederacy could be recaptured in a modern South carefully ordered by race and class—as an explanation of racial violence during the long era of segregation. And he is right to suggest that lynching was, in many cases, justified by a community's obsession with besmirched honor and its need for scapegoats. But what he adds is a degree of speculation about the meaning of the practice that is at once unnerving and unproved.

From the testimony of participants, as well as from harrowing literary depictions by writers like William Faulkner and Richard Wright, it is clear that some lynchings, in their combination of solemnity and ritual festivity, did have the character of sacrifices "to a Southern Christian God." African-American literature and commentary of the period are themselves suffused with images of the "black Christ" as lynching victim, while white racist literature, led by the novels of Thomas Dixon and epitomized in film by D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, explicitly associated racial purity with religious fervor. The further Patterson goes into symbolic anthropology, however, the more he sounds like Frances Cress Welsing.

Olfactory science, the smell of burnt offerings in Leviticus, and the prevalence of barbeque in the South are all adduced by Patterson to explain why lynching was in actuality a

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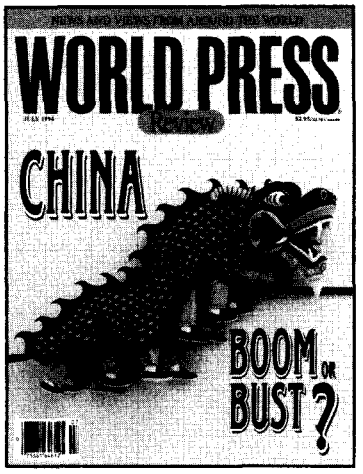

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form of cannibalism dressed up in Christian garb. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of the "raw and the cooked," the primitive and the civilized, offers him a means of arguing that the "cooked Negro, properly roasted, [was] . . . culturally transformed" into something that could be communally consumed. From there, it is but a step before Patterson invokes the analogy of Nazism to ask: "What is it about the cross that so easily turns people on to genocide? That so frequently makes bloodthirsty brutes and cannibals of ordinary men and women?"

The phrase "ordinary men" alludes to the thesis (popularized in different ways by the historians Christopher Browning and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen) that the Nazi Holocaust was carried out by common people galvanized by circumstance into a capacity, even a lust, for diabolical acts. But whether the extremities of German fascism could illuminate the underlying logic of *Rituals of Blood* is impossible to say, for the book next veers into a third chapter even more offbeat than the second.

IN THIS final chapter, Patterson portrays superstars like Michael Jordan and Michael Jackson as cultural instances of the American Dionysus: black men whose transgression of societal boundaries counters the Apollonian impulses of an "overworked, post-industrial civilization." In the wake of the civil-rights revolution, he suggests, the role of black man as sacrificial victim has given way to the role of black man as redemptive hero in the nation's race drama. But the mega-success of such men only disguises—worse, it contributes to—the black community's economic and social fragility.

Patterson's condemnation of revered athletes who hypnotize black youth with grotesque illusions of wealth, a new "Uncle Tom's cabin in the sky," rests in important ways on his prior critique of the corrupt values of a promiscuous street culture. Yet beyond this connection to the first chapter, his argument is hard to fathom. His revulsion at black outlaws like O. J. Simpson and the cross-dressing basketball star Dennis Rodman, figures of thuggery and minstrelsy elevated to iconic status, is stated in ostentatious terms:

> The 21st century of American popular culture can be said to have begun in 1994, on that wonderful night in Miami when Dennis [Rodman] first bedded down with Madonna, the ultimate Euro-American sex goddess. Not since Dionysus laid Ariadne on the island of Naxos has there been a coupling quite like that.

The trouble is that elsewhere in his work Patterson has explicitly endorsed racial mixing and intermarriage as the only sure way to overcome the heritage of slavery and racism. Why, then, should this particular "desecration of once-sacred boundaries" be decried? And how has the fearful *menace* of black sexuality—the theme of emasculation, both figurative and literal, runs through chapters one and two—been transformed in American culture into public *adoration* of black male sexuality? "For better or for worse, that's how far we have come in American 'race' relations," remarks Patterson of the Rodman-Madonna union. Unfortunately, he fails to tell us whether it is for better or for worse, and what if anything it portends.

Rituals of Blood is the second volume of a proposed trilogy. The first was *The Ordeal of Integration* (1998), a book that tried, with only passing success, to steer a course between contemporary liberals' preoccupation with the legacy of racism and contemporary conservatives' emphasis on personal responsibility and their rejection of the state acting *in loco parentis*. In that earlier book, Patterson mounted a sustained attack on ethnocentrism; advocated the phasing-out of affirmative action over a fifteen-year period; underscored the dramatic racial progress of recent generations; and announced that the category of "race" (a "relic of the Nazi era") should be banished from the national dialogue and the United States census.

Although the new book does not backtrack from these views, its reveling in the bloodshed of the past and its painful attention to the incapacitation of black men today produce a result that can only be called schizophrenic. Patterson's demand that African Americans take responsibility for their own lives and communities and his call for a "radical recommitment to stable gender, marital, and parental attitudes and behavior" are salutary. But neither his few timid proposals along those lines—better day care, child-rearing education, prosecution of deadbeat fathers—nor his exhilarating forays into ritual sacrifice and the marketing of American sports heroes tell us how to get from psycho-historicism to workable public policy. Let us hope that the key will be revealed in volume three.

See Chano Ride

Losing Our Language: How Multicultural Classroom Instruction Is Undermining Our Children's Ability to Read, Write, and Reason

by Sandra Stotsky

Free Press. 316 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Sol Stern

IN A poignant passage of her 1942 autobiography, the black writer Zora Neale Hurston describes how as a teenager living in a segregated Southern town she came

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SOL STERN *is a contributing editor of the Manhattan Institute's* City Journal.

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upon a battered copy of the collected works of John Milton while rummaging through a pile of rubbish. Without knowing anything about the author, this daughter of an Alabama sharecropper sat down and devoured *Paradise Lost*. "I luxuriated in Milton's syllables and rhythms without ever having heard that Milton was one of the greatest poets of the world," Hurston recounts. It was the beginning of a self-education that eventually led to Barnard College and to Hurston's emergence in the 1930's as a celebrated novelist and one of the leading lights of the Harlem literary renaissance.

Were she alive today, Hurston would no doubt be surprised to learn that the English classics so vital to her own personal and artistic liberation are now widely considered inappropriate for instructing African-American students, if not a racist affront to them. Not only do the leading theorists at our schools of education insist that black and white children differ greatly in their learning styles and intellectual needs, but black students in particular, they assert, need a "culturally sensitive" curriculum that will boost their "self-esteem."

In her important new book, Sandra Stotsky, a researcher at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, shows just how deeply this multiculturalist creed has penetrated into the American educational system. Focusing on the nation's elementary and secondary schools, Stotsky takes us into the classrooms where, thanks to the new mode of teaching, students of every background are increasingly failing to acquire the ability, as she puts it, "to read, write, and reason."

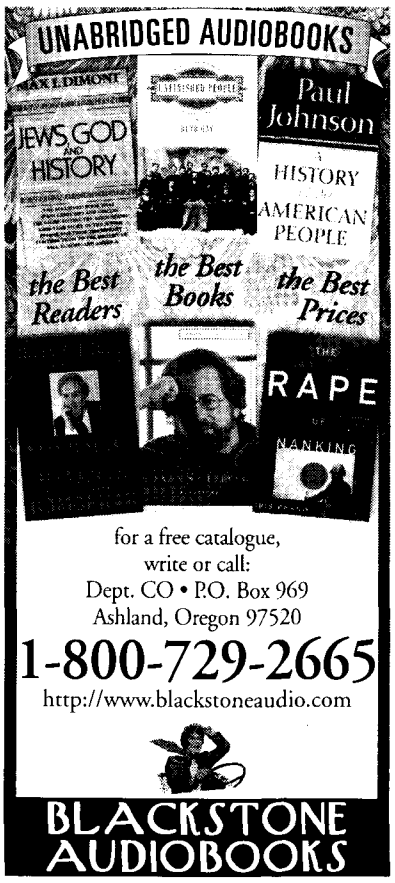
A major part of Stotsky's research consists of a volume-by-volume analysis of the most popular instructional readers used in elementary-school classrooms. Over the past half-century, she demonstrates, the content of these "basal" readers has changed radically. Complex and challenging literature for children has given way to selections of low literary quality, "dumbed down" to accommodate the least able and chosen primarily for their "correct" social and political messages. Whereas grade-school children once read classics like *Black Beauty* and *Robinson Crusoe*, now their assignments are likely to be tales like "Tonweya and the Eagles," a simple-minded piece of Indian lore full of exotic non-English words that Stotsky excerpts from a widely-used Houghton Mifflin reader:

> Tahcawin had packed the parfleche cases with clothing and food and strapped them to a travois made of two trailing poles with a skin net stretched between them. Another travois lay on the ground ready for the new tipi.
>
> Chano was very happy when Tasinagi suggested the three of them ride up to their favorite hills for the last time.
>
> As the three of them rode along, Tasinagi called Chano's attention to the two large birds circling overhead. They were Wanjbli, the eagle. Chano knew they were sacred to his people and that they must never be killed.

Worse than the multicultural readers themselves, Stotsky shows, are the teachers' guides that accompany them. Rather than focus on the skills that all students should possess, these professional manuals dwell on the differences that supposedly render common standards unworkable, if not unjust. "Both students and teachers have participated in relations of domination, submission, oppression, and privilege which have helped to shape who they are and how they interpret the world," opines the guide for one best-selling elementary-school reader. If educators are to succeed, they must recognize that both they and their students are "historically situated subjects with conflicting gender, race, and class interests."

As a practical matter, this emphasis on "difference" has meant a growing tolerance for non-standard English, as exemplified by the controversial decision of the Oakland, California, school board two years ago to allow students to use "Ebonics," or black street slang, in the classroom. At the same time, Stotsky documents, many schools have simply decided that mastery of standard English, from vocabulary and grammar to composition and reading comprehension, is no longer an important goal. Fewer than half of the state curriculum standards examined by her demand "competence in using standard English orally and in writing."

Many theorists of multicultural pedagogy, according to Stotsky, wish to go still further, having made it their mission to expel standard English from the classroom altogether. In their view, overturning traditional academic rules and expectations is a moral and political



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imperative. As a recent article in a respected journal for English teachers put it, students "should be encouraged to make intentional errors in standard form and usage" because that is the only way to end "the oppression of linguistic minorities."

AS STOTSKY shows, the driving force behind the transformation in reading instruction is a small network of education professors and consultants. These cultural commissars carry great weight, not only with elementary-school teachers eager to know what the "experts" want of them but also with commercial publishers. Indeed, on matters of race and gender, no publisher interested in having its offerings accepted by school districts and state curriculum committees would dare ignore the advice of the consultants.

The multicultural gurus have been far less successful, however, at persuading parents that the new approach is a change for the better. As Stotsky writes, the worst excesses have been foisted on unsuspecting families through a "stealth curriculum." Unlike progressive educators of the past, who openly proclaimed their goals, today's multiculturalists are generally unwilling to engage the wider public in open debate about their methods, preferring to promote their agenda *sub rosa*. When challenged, Stotsky reports, they invariably treat their critics as benighted reactionaries, calling them racists, allies of the Christian Right, or "selfish Volvo vigilantes"—all the while refusing to produce any empirical research to support their own claims.

That the advocates of early multicultural education are reluctant to study the effects of their experiment is understandable enough. American reading scores continue to decline, and the gap between black and white achievement remains scandalously wide. In Stotsky's view, it could hardly be otherwise. When progressive teachers decline to trouble with niceties like proper sentence structure, they undoubtedly do a certain amount of harm to their white, middle-class students—but at least these children return to homes where standard English is the norm and where newspapers, magazines, and books can be found. For black children from economically disadvantaged homes, by contrast, a teacher's abandonment of basic English-language skills is a crippling blow, depriving them of any hope for advancement in the real world.

THE PATH to reform, Stotsky rightly believes, leads back to the past. If today's education establishment often views low-achieving minority students as "morally and culturally superior to the mainstream and thus justified in rejecting its intellectual and civic values," not so long ago such children were almost universally thought to need "access to the intellectual and civic culture of the mainstream." For Stotsky, as for many parents and a growing number of dissenting educators, restoring this norm requires nothing more complicated than having uniformly high expectations for all students, black or white, rich or poor.

Under a regime of high expectations, self-esteem would flow not from mindless ethnic cheerleading but from genuine accomplishment. Before long, it might even become possible to replicate the inspiring example of Zora Neale Hurston, retrieving Milton once again from the rubbish pile. But first the damage done by the multiculturalists must be undone. Toward that end, this fine book makes a powerful intellectual contribution.

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